

A MATTER OF MORAL AGENCY: THE RELIGIOUS IMPETUS  
BEHIND WOODROW WILSON'S DECISION FOR  
UNILATERAL BELLIGERENCY IN  
WORLD WAR I

by

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## ABSTRACT

Why did President Woodrow Wilson not take advantage of the opportunity U.S. entrance into World War I afforded to extract promises from Allied leaders to commit to his postwar world vision? Wilson could have obligated the Allied governments to a postwar “peace without victory” settlement on his terms through a quid-pro-quo agreement in light of their deteriorated position. However, Wilson chose not to impose any conditions on the Allied governments in return for U.S. troops but decided on an independent course that designated the United States a wartime associate, as opposed to an allied, power.

In this thesis, I examine Woodrow Wilson’s religious world view related to mankind’s political progress to investigate its impact on his understanding of the European situation prior to U.S. entry into World War I. I hope to discern how it may have influenced Wilson’s decision to inaugurate what has become the established U.S. policy of unilateral belligerency in wartime. First, I research the theological origins and assumptions of Wilson’s religious world view. Second, I examine its political and social evolution and analyze how Wilson applied his mature religious lens to the global, and in particular the European, situation prior to World War I. Finally, I focus on how his religious interpretation served as the motivation to keep the United States separate as an active participant and refrain from postwar conditions.

My findings suggest that Wilson held a steadfast faith in nations' divinely-bestowed moral agency to choose political perfection embodied in U.S.-democratized governance. Wilson's religious world view prescribed a common Bible-based Christian heritage between the peoples of the United States and Western Europe. Consequently, Wilson refused to take a position in the war that hinted at coercion. He crafted a foreign policy that reflected his religious faith in their moral judgment to find and steer the proper course despite their leaders' agendas. Wilson remained separate from alliances and power politics during the passive and aggressive phases of his policy. He believed that such a position provided the peoples of Europe with the clearest possible choice between the path to future conflict and the path to permanent peace.

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## INTRODUCTION

On April 2, 1917 President Woodrow Wilson appeared before a joint session of Congress and asked for a formal declaration of war against Germany. Active U.S. participation in the conflict, he said, was:

For democracy, for the rights of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.<sup>1</sup>

His directional change committed U.S. troops to fight against German aggression. It also created an opportunity for the United States to play a leading role in the postwar settlement, at which time Wilson planned to usher in his long-term vision of a New World Order.

Why did President Woodrow Wilson not take advantage of the opportunity U.S. entrance into World War I afforded to extract promises from Allied leaders to commit to his postwar world vision? Wilson could have obligated the Allied governments to a postwar “peace without victory” settlement on his terms through a quid-pro-quo agreement in light of their deteriorated position.<sup>2</sup> By the time that the United States entered World War I, British and French Armed Forces faced a losing battle against the

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<sup>1</sup>Woodrow Wilson, “An Address to a Joint Session of Congress,” April 2, 1917, in *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, eds. Arthur S. Link et al. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966-1993), 41:526-27 (hereafter referred to as *PWW*, followed by volume and page numbers).

<sup>2</sup>Woodrow Wilson, “An Address to the Senate,” January 22, 1917, in *PWW*, 40:533-39.

German military machine after three years of exhaustive trench warfare.<sup>3</sup> According to historian Harley Notter, “not to exact pledges was, of course to incur a risk of failure to make peace later on Wilson’s terms.”<sup>4</sup> However, Wilson chose not to impose any conditions on the Allied governments in return for U.S. troops. Instead, the president decided on an independent course that designated the United States a wartime associate, as opposed to an allied, power.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, differences between Wilson and the Allied leaders related to the world’s future peace remained unresolved. They led to conflict at the postwar peace negotiations in Paris and eventual disappointment for Wilson at home.<sup>6</sup> Based on my examination, I argue that Woodrow Wilson’s religious

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<sup>3</sup>For more on the British and French situation in World War I prior to U.S. entrance, see Roger Chickering and Stig Forster, eds. *Great War, Total War: Combat and Mobilization on the Western Front, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Robert A. Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory: French Strategy and Operations in the Great War* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (New York: Macmillan, 1963; reprint, New York: Bonanza Books, 1982); Winston Groom, *A Storm in Flanders, The Ypres Salient, 1914-1918: Tragedy and Triumph on the Western Front* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2002); Ian Ousby, *The Road to Verdun: World War I’s Most Momentous Battle and the Folly of Nationalism* (New York: Doubleday, 2002); Robin Prior and Trevor Wilson, *The Somme* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005); Leon Wolff, *In Flanders Fields: The 1917 Campaign* (The Viking Press, Inc., 1958; New York: Time Incorporated, 1963); Peter H. Liddle ed. *Passchendaele in Perspective: The Third Battle of Ypres* (London: Leo Cooper, 1997); John Toland, *No Man’s Land: 1918, The Last Year of the Great War* (New York: Smithmark Publishers, Inc., 1980).

<sup>4</sup>Harley Notter, *The Origins of the Foreign Policy of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1965), 624-25 footnote.

<sup>5</sup>Woodrow Wilson, “An Annual Message on the State of the Union,” December 4, 1917, in *PWW*, 45:194-202.

<sup>6</sup>Extensive research exists on the Paris Peace Conference. A sampling includes Charles T. Thompson, *The Peace Conference Day by Day: A Presidential Pilgrimage Leading to the Discovery of Europe* (New York: Brentano’s, 1920); H.W.V. Temperley ed., *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, 6 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1920); Edward Mandell House and Charles Seymour, eds., *What Really Happened at Paris: The Story of the Peace Conference, 1918-1919 by American Delegates* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1921); Robert Lansing, *The Peace Negotiations: A Personal Narrative* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1921); Andre Tardieu, *The Truth About the Treaty* (Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1921); Ray Stannard Baker, *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement: Written from His Unpublished and Personal Material*, 3 vols. (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1922); David Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939); Thomas Bailey, *Wilson and the Peacemakers* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1947); Herbert Hoover, *The Ordeal of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1958); Arno



conviction in man's national self-determination served as the underlying motivation in his decision to refrain from committing the Allied governments to his peace program.

The scholarly explanations advanced to explain why Wilson chose to keep the United States separate and not impose conditions once he took the country to war center on modern rational, secular assumptions of national interest. One popular argument focuses on a comment that Wilson made to Colonel House in 1917 that he believed he could use financial leverage to force the Allies to acquiesce to his terms once the United States won the war.<sup>7</sup> Other scholars point to Wilson's fear of internal dissensions among the Allied countries that could have led to a split if they were faced with the prospect of gaining nothing concrete in terms of spoils.<sup>8</sup> More recently, historian Robert Tucker maintained that German submarine warfare on U.S. overseas trade forced Wilson to enter the war out of economic necessity; therefore, he was in no position to offer the Allies anything they might want in return for their allegiance to his version of postwar collective security.<sup>9</sup> The lone exception to this rational line of reasoning, and least satisfactory

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J. Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles, 1918-1919* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967); Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Woodrow Wilson and the American Diplomatic Tradition: The Treaty Fight in Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Arthur S. Link, ed., *The Deliberations of the Council of Four March 24-June 28, 1919: Notes of the Official Interpreter Paul Mantoux*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); John Milton Cooper, Jr., *Breaking the Heart of the World: Woodrow Wilson and the Fight for the League of Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2002).

<sup>7</sup>Woodrow Wilson to Edward Mandell House, July 21, 1917, in *PWW*, 43:237-38.

<sup>8</sup>Notter, *Origins*, 624-25 footnote.

<sup>9</sup>Robert W. Tucker, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great War: Reconsidering America's Neutrality 1914-1917* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007), 214.

explanation, has been put forward by Arthur S. Link, the leading twentieth-century expert on Woodrow Wilson. He argued that Wilson never thought about it.<sup>10</sup>

It is interesting to note the absence of Wilson's religious understanding of mankind and the world in historians' attempts to explain his motivation behind his foreign policy decisions when one considers Link's admission that Wilson's statesmanship "was the product of insight and wisdom informed by active Christian faith."<sup>11</sup> Historian Malcolm D. Magee has observed that, in general, modern scholars strive to identify and describe ideology according to the Enlightenment's *intellectual* definition of human reason; as a result, they "are challenged when encountering extrarational forces, including religion, at work in the subjects they study." They tend "to ignore or marginalize these forces when trying to make sense of the record or fit it into some coherent theory." Nowhere is this tendency more apparent than with the study of Woodrow Wilson's foreign policy, despite Wilson's insistence through an extensive public and private record that "faith was the foundation for all his international actions."<sup>12</sup> Over time, the historiography has evolved variations on what modern historians define as secular themes to explain Wilson's ideology and how it influenced his actions on the international stage.

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<sup>10</sup>Arthur S. Link, *Wilson*, vol. 5, *Campaigns for Progressivism and Peace, 1916-1917* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 409.

<sup>11</sup>Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson: A Brief Biography* (Cleveland: World Publishing, 1963), 10, 27; Arthur S. Link, *The Higher Realism of Woodrow Wilson and Other Essays* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1971), 139.

<sup>12</sup>Malcolm Magee, *What the World Should Be: Woodrow Wilson and the Crafting of a Faith-Based Foreign Policy* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2008), 1, 4.

The earliest works through the 1930s praised Wilson's actions and foresight, exemplified in Charles Seymour's 1934 book, *American Diplomacy During the World War*. Seymour painted a favorable portrait of Wilson's policy actions based on his close relationship with Colonel House. He became one of the first historians to describe Wilson's diplomacy as a successful blend of "enlightened realpolitik" and "abstract idealism."<sup>13</sup>

In the 1940s and 1950s historians began to rethink Wilson's foreign policy in terms of critical analysis. Career diplomat George Kennan, journalist Walter Lippmann, theorist Hans Morgenthau, and international relations expert Robert E. Osgood developed realistic interpretations based on Wilson's vision for the League of Nations. They criticized his statecraft for a lack of practical understanding in European affairs and described him as an idealistic visionary unable to cope with the real world; however they did not provide any definition of his idealism or why that idealism underlay Wilson's international policy.<sup>14</sup>

Positive interpretations of Wilson's practical handling of immediate crises appeared from the 1960s to the 1980s. Historians such as Arthur S. Link, Ernest R. May,

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<sup>13</sup>Charles Seymour, *American Diplomacy During the World War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1934), 255.

<sup>14</sup>George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950*, exp. ed. (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 67-69; Walter Lippman, *U.S. Foreign Policy: Shield of the Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943; reprint, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1943), 31-37; Hans J. Morgenthau, *In Defense of the National Interest: A Critical Examination of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), 23-30; Robert Endicott Osgood, *Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations: The Great Transformation of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 9-10, 146-47, 152-53, 175-82, 188-95, 262, 266-68, 295-304.

Frederick S. Calhoun, John Milton Cooper and others endeavored to repudiate the realists' argument that Wilson's foreign policy lacked a rational, or realistic, context.<sup>15</sup>

Link explained Wilson's diplomacy in terms of a "higher realism." He described the president as "keenly intelligent and often shrewd," determined to maintain a balance of power through an infusion of "Christian ethics": a balance that included the means to safeguard "German power in Central Europe during and after the World War as a restraint on Russia and France."<sup>16</sup> Link, along with John Mulder, Jan W.S. Nordholt, and P.C. Kemeny, recognized the foundational and integral part that Wilson's religious understanding played in his political thought process; however, each failed to explain how Wilson's faith influenced his political thought and actions.<sup>17</sup> According to Edwin Weinstein and later Kendrick Clements, Wilson came to view the world from a religious perspective, but only subsequent to his diminishing health, which rendered him unable to consistently think in rational terms. Such a perspective, they argued, allowed Wilson a refuge from the reality that he no longer had full use of his mental capacity.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft: Theory and Practice of Liberal Internationalism during World War I* (Wilmington, Dela: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1991), xii.

<sup>16</sup>Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War, and Peace* (Arlington Heights: AHM Publishing, 1979), 11-13; Link, *Higher Realism*, 127-39.

<sup>17</sup>Link, *Brief Biography*, 10; Link, *Higher Realism*, 129; John M. Mulder, *Woodrow Wilson: The Years of Preparation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978); Jan Willem Schulte Nordholt, *Woodrow Wilson: A Life for World Peace* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991); P.C. Kemeny, *Princeton in the Nation's Service, Religious Ideals and Educational Practice, 1868-1928* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998). Mulder, who focused his research on the religious aspects of Wilson's political thought, unfortunately ended his analysis at the moment that Wilson embarked on his political career as Governor of New Jersey; Nordholt argued that Wilson "always...spoke of spiritual values..." (421); Kemeny, like Mulder, restricted his study of Wilson prior to the New Jersey governorship.

<sup>18</sup>Edwin A. Weinstein, *Woodrow Wilson: A Medical and Psychological Biography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Kendrick A. Clements, *Woodrow Wilson: World Statesman* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1999), 216-18.

Ernest R. May argued that Wilson exhibited an “unrealistic *moral* fervor and ruthless practicality.” Such a paradoxical combination created a “sublime realism” in Wilson’s foreign policy. It endowed him with the foresight to adhere to neutrality at a time when Germany’s threat to U.S. national security remained decidedly unclear. May also contended that Wilson envisioned his dreams in an “eternal future” yet developed a diplomacy that “assumed any contingency more than six months away to be out of calculation.” Thus, he “concerned himself with the immediate interests of his country” above all other considerations.<sup>19</sup>

Frederick S. Calhoun and John Milton Cooper portrayed Wilson in terms of his ability to conduct a war “of limited commitments and objectives” and maintain “a precarious balance between aid to the Allies and emphasis on separate American aims.” Calhoun interpreted Wilson’s use of power to intervene in other countries as part of an American Internationalism strategy: “Wilson realized that force, as an aspect of power, must be limited in scope and invested with clear purpose and identifiable, realistic goals”; as a result, he “confined its uses to particular, well-defined aims.”<sup>20</sup> Cooper labeled Wilson’s “peace without victory” goals as realistic compared to what he described as Theodore Roosevelt’s idealistic focus on total victory. Although Cooper admitted a

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<sup>19</sup>Ernest R. May, *The World War and American Isolation, 1914-1917* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 40, 436-37; Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, xiii.

<sup>20</sup>Frederick S. Calhoun, *Power and Principle: Armed Intervention in Wilsonian Foreign Policy* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1986), 220; Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, xv.

religious aspect to Wilson that facilitated humility about his relationship to God's purposes, he argued that it never influenced his secular career.<sup>21</sup>

Historians Niels Aage Thorsen and John A. Thompson expanded on Cooper's interpretation. Thorsen argued that any emphasis on Wilson's religious belief related to his political career constituted *premodern* thinking and digressed from his political views. However, he posited that Wilson did not hesitate to wield it as a rhetorical tool to serve his political purposes.<sup>22</sup> Thompson ventured further and stated that "Wilson's career cannot persuasively be interpreted as an attempt to reform human affairs in accordance with some higher, or Christian, ideal." He concluded that "American secular ideology" underlay Wilson's foreign policy.<sup>23</sup> Cooper, Thorsen, and Thompson acknowledged that Wilson's religion bestowed upon him conformity and respectability that helped make him politically attractive, but its influence ended there.<sup>24</sup> Economic historian N. Gordon Levin went so far as to argue that Wilson's "anti-imperialist and anti-Bolshevik sense of America's liberal-exceptionalist missionary idealism was perfectly compatible with his

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<sup>21</sup>John Milton Cooper Jr., *The Warrior and the Priest: Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 19, 271, 327, 337; Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, xiv; Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 2-3. In his most recent works, *Breaking the Heart of the World: Woodrow Wilson and the Fight for the League of Nations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), ed., *Reconsidering Woodrow Wilson: Progressivism, Internationalism, War, and Peace* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), and *Woodrow Wilson* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2009), Cooper maintains his assumption that Wilson kept his religious views out of his political decision-making.

<sup>22</sup>Niels Aage Thorsen, *The Political Thought of Woodrow Wilson, 1875-1910* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 237-38; Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 3.

<sup>23</sup>John A. Thompson, *Woodrow Wilson: Profiles in Power* (London and New York: Longman Press, 2002), 249-50.

<sup>24</sup>Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 3.

sense of America's national self-interest," i.e., "America's future commercial expansion, . . . to maintain its moral and financial world leadership."<sup>25</sup>

The most recent transition beginning in the 1990s represents a return to critical analysis led by historian Lloyd E. Ambrosius. These scholars acknowledge both the short-term practical and the long-term idealistic facets of Wilson's diplomacy. They argue that because his particular ideology did not include the idea of pluralism and interdependence among the world's nations, Wilson could never have reconciled the two into an adequate foreign policy for the twentieth century. Ambrosius includes a secular social gospel definition of Wilson's religious understanding as one "foundation" for his "statecraft"; however, he explains "Wilsonianism" in terms of social science, the American experience, and secular progress.<sup>26</sup> Robert MacNamara and James Blight identify Wilson's New World Order as rooted in a secularized, Southern, post-Civil War life experience and juxtaposed with a narrow religious morality that destroyed it.<sup>27</sup>

According to Magee, the consequent realist, idealist, corporatist, liberal-capitalist, liberal-internationalist, progressive-internationalist labels etc., that the above historians and many others have affixed to Wilson's foreign policy reflect scholars' discomfort, and to varying degrees embarrassment, with "the reality of a believing, practicing, evangelical

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<sup>25</sup>N. Gordon Levin Jr., *Woodrow Wilson and World Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 257.

<sup>26</sup>Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, x-xii, xv-xvi, 1-28; Lloyd E. Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism: Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy in American Foreign Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 1, 23-29.

<sup>27</sup>Robert S. MacNamara and James G. Blight, *Wilson's Ghost* (New York: Public Affairs, 2001), 10-11; Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 4.

Christian in the White House.”<sup>28</sup> This reticence to examine religion as a component in Wilson’s political actions helps to explain the absence of a scholarly dialogue on religion in U.S. foreign relations history as a whole. Historian Andrew Preston argues that such a “deliberate neglect . . . refuses to engage historical figures on their own terms. It explicitly addresses historians’ concerns and rejects what was important to people of the past.” Citing Perry Miller as an example, Preston continues that “historians who embrace religion as a subject do not need to argue on behalf of a particular denomination, faith or belief system.” He states further that “while religion is potentially diffuse, imprecise, and unwieldy, the same could easily be said for gender, race, and culture, and few would doubt their causal utility”; thus, “there are few justifiable defenses for diplomatic historians’ agnosticism.”<sup>29</sup> Malcolm Magee and Mark Benbow have begun to address the discrepancy as it relates to Woodrow Wilson.<sup>30</sup> My research fits within this critique to explain Wilson’s foreign policy decisions in terms of his religious belief.

In this thesis, I examine Woodrow Wilson’s religious world view related to mankind’s political progress to investigate its impact on his understanding of the European situation prior to U.S. entry into World War I. I hope to discern how it may have influenced his decision to inaugurate what has become the established U.S. policy

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<sup>28</sup>Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 4-6. Other historians include Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). Daniel D. Stid, *The President as Statesman: Woodrow Wilson and the Constitution* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); Phyllis Lee Levin, *Edith and Woodrow* (New York: Scribner, 2001); Margaret MacMillan, *Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2001).

<sup>29</sup>Andrew Preston, “Bridging the Gap between the Sacred and the Secular in the History of American Foreign Relations,” *The Journal for the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations* 30, no. 5 (2006): 811-812.

<sup>30</sup>Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 5; Mark Benbow, *Leading Them to the Promised Land: Woodrow Wilson, Covenant Theology, and the Mexican Revolution, 1913-1915* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2010).



of unilateral belligerency in wartime. First, I research the theological origins and assumptions of Wilson's religious world view. Second, I examine its political and social evolution and analyze how Wilson applied his mature religious lens to the global, and in particular the European, situation prior to World War I. Finally, I focus on how his religious interpretation served as the motivation to keep the United States separate as an active participant and refrain from postwar conditions.

The primary sources used in the research on Wilson include the sixty-nine-volume *Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, the six-volume *Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, the eight-volume *Woodrow Wilson, Life and Letters*, and John Maynard Keynes' *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*.

Wilson's works include *The State: Elements of Historical and Practical Politics*, his five-volume *A History of the American People, Congressional Government, Constitutional Government, Division and Reunion: 1829-1889, The Political Thought of Woodrow Wilson*, and *Woodrow Wilson's Case for the League of Nations*.

Protestant Reformation and Enlightenment primary works include the *Westminster Confession of Faith A.D. 1647*, the *Second Helvetic Confession of 1566*, Augustine's *Of the City of God*, Heinrich Bullinger's *A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God*, Jean Calvin's two-volume *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Foxe's *Unabridged Acts and Monuments*, Joseph Mede's *Key to the Apocalypse*, and Thomas Reid's *Essays on the Active Powers of the Human Mind*, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, and *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*.

American Protestant and Presbyterian primary works include Jonathan Edwards' *A History of the Work of Redemption*, Charles Hodge's three-volume *Systematic Theology*, *The Way of Life*, *What is Darwinism*, and "The Bible Argument on Slavery," in *Cotton is King, and Proslavery Arguments*, Mark Noll, ed., *The Princeton Theology, 1812-1921: Scripture, Science, and Theological Method from Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield*, Joseph Ruggles Wilson's *Mutual Relation of Masters and Slaves as Taught in the Bible*, and *Dr. James Woodrow as Seen by His Friends* edited by Marion Woodrow.

Primary works of the Intellectual Enlightenment include George Berkeley's *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, Rene Descartes' *Discourses on the Method*; and, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, David Hume's two-volume *A Treatise on Human Nature*, John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and Charles Darwin's *On The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*.

Numerous secondary sources inform the thesis, of which a few of the most useful on Woodrow Wilson's religious worldview include Lloyd Ambrosius' *Wilsonian Statecraft: Theory and Practice of Liberal Internationalism during World War I*, David Bebbington's *William Ewart Gladstone: Faith and Politics in Victorian Britain*, Mark Benbow's *Leading Them to the Promised Land: Woodrow Wilson, Covenant Theology, and the Mexican Revolution, 1913-1915*, Thomas Knock's *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order*, Malcom Magee's *What the World Should Be: Woodrow Wilson and the Crafting of a Faith-Based Foreign Policy*, and John Mulder's *Woodrow Wilson: The Years of Preparation*.

Secondary works on American Protestant exceptionalism and Presbyterianism include Ernest Tuveson's *Redeemer Nation*, Jack Maddex Jr.'s "Proslavery Millennialism: Social Eschatology in Antebellum Calvinism," Charles McCoy and J. Wayne Baker's *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition*, Morton Smith's *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology*, David Torbett's *Theology and Slavery*, and David Well's *Reformed Theology in America*.

My findings suggest that Wilson held a steadfast faith in man's divinely-bestowed moral agency to choose a foreordained path toward what he interpreted to be the culmination of God's law for nations: political perfection embodied in U.S.-democratized governance. Wilson's religious faith reflected a theological world view that prescribed a common Bible-based Christian heritage between the peoples of the United States and Western Europe. He believed that the European peoples had divinely-endowed sovereign claims to decide their nations' fates based on his biblical understanding of words that included *covenant*, *law*, and *freedom*. As a result, Wilson held sacred the European peoples' right to choose how quickly they progressed along that path. He viewed the use of force as counterproductive to their civilizations' advancement unless its sole purpose was to liberate the oppressed from leaders corrupted by selfish interest. However, Wilson's religious faith that the nations, beginning with his own, would naturally choose to establish, ratify, and implement his peace plan to a successful conclusion eventually doomed his vision to failure.

## THEOLOGICAL ORIGINS AND ASSUMPTIONS OF WILSON'S MILLENNIALISM

The prominent historian Eric Goldman has argued that Woodrow Wilson's belief in a people to choose proper government is embedded in the American psyche:

Throughout the history of the United States, and never more so than in the progressive years when Wilson came to political maturity, a potent idea has run through American thinking . . . . Ordinary people are good, the credo runs. In the long run, they are wise. They may have their aberrations; they may be misled. But before long they will adjust themselves, get to the heart of the matter, and come up with the decent and sensible solution.<sup>1</sup>

No one personified this ideal in thought and action more than Woodrow Wilson: he "was a quite unusual American in many ways, but he was of the purest stock in his total, unqualified, near mystical faith in ordinary people."<sup>2</sup>

To understand Wilson's confidence in the Western European nations to choose his New World vision requires that we examine the theological origins and assumptions that undergirded his faith. According to historian John Mulder, Woodrow Wilson defined religion as "a series of values, assumptions, and attitudes, a way of perceiving the world and understanding his place within it." More than an intellectual exercise, the faith-based principles that Wilson espoused "were so fundamental to his thought and behavior that although they did mature and develop, Wilson refused to see them as

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<sup>1</sup>Eric F. Goldman, "The Test of War," in *Woodrow Wilson and the World Today*, ed. Arthur P. Dudden (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957), 62.

<sup>2</sup>Goldman, "The Test of War," 62.

subject to intellectual change.”<sup>3</sup> This consistency in Woodrow Wilson’s religious make-up was evidenced by his comment to his White House physician, Dr. Cary T. Grayson, that “[s]o far as religion is concerned, argument is adjourned.”<sup>4</sup> An investigation of his religious faith becomes critical to answer key underlying questions. What was Woodrow Wilson’s religious belief related to mankind’s political progress? How did that religious belief shape his understanding of humanity in terms of race, color, and gender?

The root of Wilson’s faith in a nation’s moral judgment lay in a progressive millennialist interpretation of agency and progress that he inherited from his father, the Reverend Joseph Ruggles Wilson. According to historian consensus, Joseph R. Wilson exerted “unquestionably the most important influence in his [Wilson’s] intellectual life, particularly in the formation and development of his religious faith and early political ideas.” A product of Princeton Theological Seminary and founding member of the Southern Presbyterian Church, Joseph R. Wilson taught his son a view of human progress structured on an *Americanized* Calvinist theology. As a result, Wilson developed a “comprehensive theological view of the individual, the church, and society, each with its own function and place within the divine scheme of government of the world.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, xiii.

<sup>4</sup>Ray Stannard Baker, ed., *Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters*, vol. 1, *Youth, 1856-1890* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page, & Co., 1927), 68 (hereafter referred to as *WWLL* followed by volume and page number); Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, xiii.

<sup>5</sup>Baker, *WWLL*, 1:1-49, 56-70; Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, 31, 8. For further reading on the relationship between Woodrow Wilson and Joseph Ruggles Wilson, see John Mulder, “Joseph Ruggles Wilson: Southern Presbyterian Patriarch,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 52 (1974): 245-71. For more on Wilson’s Presbyterian roots see Francis P. Weisenberger, “The Middle Western Antecedents of Woodrow Wilson,” *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 23, no. 3 (Dec. 1936): 375-390.

*English Protestantism*

Wilson's progressive millennialist interpretation of the world combined "a paternalistic sense of social responsibility with a schematic theology of God's providential direction of history."<sup>6</sup> A doctrine "among English-speaking Protestants since the later seventeenth century,"<sup>7</sup> progressive millennialism developed from two major consequences of the Reformation. The first resulted in the Old Testament's return from allegory and metaphor to a historical context that designated to the people and church of God a continuous history as "one society" from the beginning. Thus, the church "that was before the Israelitish church" was "the same society and "essentially the same religion . . . professed and practiced . . . ." The "Christian church," in turn, was the "same society" as the Israelitish church "before Christ came; grafted on the same root, built on the same foundation." Consequently, this continuity applied to "the opposition . . . made to the church of God in all ages . . . ." Whether "old" or "new," it "always" attacked the "same religion, and the same revelation."<sup>8</sup> As a result, continuity allowed men to apply biblical meaning to any age and circumstance. The whole earth became the battlefield of one great war between the forces of good and evil; the whole of history furnished the account of that war.

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<sup>6</sup>Jack P. Maddex Jr., "Proslavery Millennialism: Social Eschatology in Antebellum Southern Calvinism, *American Quarterly*, vol. 31 no. 1 (Spring, 1979): 47.

<sup>7</sup>Ernest L. Tuveson, "Apocalypse and History," in *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 1-24, 34. For a fuller explanation of progressive millennialism see Ernest Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia: A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964).

<sup>8</sup>Jonathan Edwards, "Sermon Twenty-five," in *Works of Jonathan Edwards Online*, vol. 9, *A History of the Work of Redemption* [book on-line]; ed. John F. Wilson (Jonathan Edwards Center at Yale University, 2008, accessed August 2011): 442-44; available from <http://edwards.yale.edu/research/browse>; Internet; Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation*, 26-27.

The second consequence of the Reformation resulted from a subsequent historical interpretation of the New Testament's Book of Revelation written by English Protestant scholar Joseph Mede.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly, the Old Testament's "intensely historical nature" showed that God revealed the "optimistic solution" of redemption to conquer evil "within the events in time and this world as well as in eternity . . . "; otherwise, He would not have bothered to provide mankind with the Bible's "detailed account" of the war.<sup>10</sup> Augustine's supposition that the millennium was "allegorical" and as a result man's social, or political, history meant little in the long run no longer predominated.<sup>11</sup> Read within an historical context, the Revelation of St. John intimated that the Millennium comprised Christ's spiritual kingdom and man's secular kingdoms combined in a future mortal, historical kingdom of God on earth. During this thousand-year period, the "kingdom of Christ" would extend "over all the earth" and "all nations" would "serve him . . . and . . . call him blessed."<sup>12</sup>

Protestant millennialists interpreted both changes in biblical understanding to mean that man's history reflected God's plan to redeem individuals and human society in

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<sup>9</sup>Joseph Mede, *Key to the Apocalypse, Discovered and Demonstarated from the Internal and Inserted Characters of the Visions* [book on-line] trans. R. Bransby Cooper, Esq., (London: Gilbert & Rivington, 1833, accessed August 2011); available from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/mede/key.toc.html>; Internet. For more on Joseph Mede and his eschatology see Jeffrey K. Jue, *Heaven Upon Earth: Joseph Mede (1586-1638) and the Legacy of Millenarianism* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006).

<sup>10</sup>Mede, *Key to the Apocalypse*, 68-114; Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation*, 28-29.

<sup>11</sup>Augustine, *City of God and Christian Doctrine* [book on-line], in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, series 1, vol. 2, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Marcus Dods (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1887, reprint Grand Rapids, Mich.: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed August 2011): 972-75; available from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.html>; Internet.

<sup>12</sup>Mede, *Key to the Apocalypse*, 68; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 3 (New York: Scribner's, 1872): 856-59, 864-66.

parallel.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, Wilson took little stock in the evangelical notion that Christianity served only “as a means of saving individual souls.” It served a greater purpose to make and finish a nation’s “character.”<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the “stages” foretold by Saint John to reach the righteous earthly state referred to specific past, present, or future historical events brought about through natural and successive, rather than supernatural, means. Wilson believed that beginning with Christ’s first advent “all nations” or the “Gentile world” would gradually convert to Christianity as “the battlefield of every-day life” progressed and Christ’s army inexorably gained ground over the Enemy. Once Christianized, the world’s nations would progress slowly over time along a Divinely-established-and-directed path of political progress. Movement forward on this national “providential” path to political perfection would result as a natural consequence of society’s voluntary obedience to Christian principles. Men, whose natural desires motivated them to choose to, would eventually bring to pass God’s kingdom on earth, free from war and social ills, through perfected national government.<sup>15</sup>

Wilson elucidated Protestant millennialist doctrine in *The State, Elements of Historical and Practical Politics*. Written in political terms, *The State* reflected Wilson’s comfort with synthesizing his religious faith and earthly mission into an inseparable sacred/secular explanation of life and human progress that historians Cooper and Thorsen have attempted to distinguish. When he spoke or wrote on the subject, Wilson simply

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<sup>13</sup>Jonathan Edwards, *A History of the Work of Redemption*, 115-18, 122-23, 143-49, 356, 445, 471-86; Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation*, 26-31.

<sup>14</sup>Woodrow Wilson, An Address to the Pittsburgh Y.M.C.A., Oct. 24, 1914, in *PWW*, 31:221; Woodrow Wilson, A Religious Talk, “Religion and Patriotism,” July 4, 1902, in *PWW*, 12:475-76.

<sup>15</sup>Woodrow Wilson, A Religious Essay, “Christ’s Army,” August 17, 1876, in *PWW*, 1:180-81; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:800-01, 804-05; Matthew 24: 14 and 28:19-20 KJV (King James Version); Mark 13:10 and 16:15 KJV; Maddex, “Proslavery Millennialism,” 46.



used the vernacular of the particular audience that he addressed to express himself in terms the audience would understand, be it religious, political, social, or literary.<sup>16</sup>

In *The State*, Wilson compared the evolution of government in Western nations to argue that Western societies had shifted from an ancient cyclical, or “mechanical,” movement to a modern linear, or “progressive,” movement. In the ancient world, “[s]ociety was the unit; the individual the fraction. Man existed for society. He was all his life long in tutelage; only society was old enough to take charge of itself. The State was the only Individual.”<sup>17</sup> Man’s “subordination” or slavery to the state led to “an almost inevitable . . . tendency” for states “of long life” to pass through a “cycle of degeneracies and revolutions.” According to Aristotle’s analysis, monarchy, the “natural first form of government for every state,” eventually sank into tyranny. A revolt by “princely leaders” checked the tyranny and set up the second “*healthful*” form: an aristocracy. Aristocracy, in turn, declined into “selfish oligarchy” which set off “hot revolution.” Democracy, the final standard form, succeeded revolution but eventually broke out into “license and Anarchy” because it lost its “early respect for law” and “amiability of mutual concession.” At that point only a “Caesar” could return society to “reason and order.” With one cycle ended, a new one began.<sup>18</sup>

The rise of Christianity laid the foundation for Western societies’ return to the “truly natural and organic” character that existed in the earliest human society: an “evolution of experience, an interlaced growth of tenacious relationships, a compact,

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<sup>16</sup>Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 12-14; Cooper, *The Warrior and the Priest*, 19; Thorsen, *Political Thought*, 237-38.

<sup>17</sup>Woodrow Wilson, *The State: Elements of Historical and Practical Politics*, rev. ed. (Boston, New York, Chicago: D. C. Heath & Co., Publishers, 1898), 583.

<sup>18</sup>Wilson, *The State*, 576-78.

living, organic whole, structural, not mechanical.”<sup>19</sup> Christianity’s spread throughout the Western world broke the Roman state’s control over men related to life’s “deepest matters” because it “gave each man a magistracy over himself by insisting upon his personal, individual responsibility to God” with “only his own conscience as a guide.” Consequently, the Christian required “an individuality which no claim of his State upon him could rightfully be suffered to infringe.” Thus, Christianity set men free to choose the right way to live according to their natural moral nature. Combined with “institutions of the German conquerors of the fifth century” that introduced “an individuality of another sort,-the idea of allegiance to individuals . . . ,” Christianity fueled society’s movement away from Aristotle’s degenerative cycle toward a progressive course of development.<sup>20</sup> Its “truths of the individuality of men’s consciences, the right of individual judgment . . . ,” soon “penetrated to the masses of the people” through the work of Martin Luther and other reformers. Their subsequent “deliverance from mental and spiritual bondage to Pope or Schoolman” motivated the populace to “gradually put away the childish things of their days of ignorance” and begin to “claim a part in affairs.” Eventually the people matured into social, political adulthood, “ready to govern themselves . . . ,” through public access to biblical and secular knowledge, heretofore unattainable except to clergy and the scholar elite. The “consent” of “majorities,” of a “thinking people,” replaced the “force of minorities” to become the “sanction of every rule” in modern government. The “Whole,” awakened to “self-consciousness” and “self-directive,” its “common habit . . . operative . . . in initiative and progress,” left

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<sup>19</sup>Wilson, *The State*, 576.

<sup>20</sup>Wilson, *The State*, 583-84.

“Aristotle’s Monarchies and Aristocracies” behind and “set upon a new course of development.”<sup>21</sup>

### *Nineteenth-century Americanization*

For the millennialist Wilson, perfected national government equated to U.S.-established democracy. His religious conviction reflected a widespread and deeply-held nineteenth-century belief that had evolved within the Calvinist-based Protestant denominations transplanted from Great Britain to North America in the 1600s.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, the United States of America was the only nation to embody complete individual and societal, i.e., political, Christian liberty. Providential separation from her mother country by an ocean had allowed the American fledgling to extend, perpetuate, and perfect, rather than copy, the Protestant reforms that had advanced her English parent further along the path to full political liberty than any other Christian nation. Purged of “all church prerogative” that remained part of English legal theory, the new nation’s law adhered to the pure Christian principles of agency that excluded a national church and allowed full freedom of conscience.<sup>23</sup> Its unique position at the forefront of Christian democracy fitted the American nation for the divinely-bestowed mission to lead the earth’s nations toward popular government, the culmination of which would inaugurate the Millennium. Consequently, the millennial state would be “a time of great and long

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<sup>21</sup>Wilson, *The State*, 585-86.

<sup>22</sup>For more on millennialism in its Americanized form, see David E. Smith, “Millenarian Scholarship in America,” *American Quarterly* 17, no. 3 (Autumn, 1965): 535-49; Lakshmi Mani, *The Apocalyptic Vision in Nineteenth Century Fiction: A Study of Cooper, Hawthorne, and Melville* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981).

<sup>23</sup>Wilson, *The State*, 435, 456.

continued prosperity.”<sup>24</sup> The resultant universal Christian influence would reform the nations’ popular governments along Americanized democratic principles and prepare the nations to receive Christ. After the Millennium and a subsequent apostasy within His kingdom on earth, Christ would return and judge the nations. In turn, the nations would cease as the historical “kingdoms of this world” and become the heavenly kingdom “of the Lord and of his Christ.”<sup>25</sup> Thus, for Wilson, “God required a nation to “save itself on this side of the grave . . . ”; there was “no other side for it.”<sup>26</sup>

Certain doctrinal assumptions, established by his father’s mentor Charles Hodge, informed Wilson’s Americanized millennialist belief.<sup>27</sup> Known as the “Princeton Theologian,” Hodge graduated from both the College of New Jersey (renamed Princeton University in 1896<sup>28</sup>) and Princeton Theological Seminary to become one of the first full-time theologians in the United States.<sup>29</sup> Hodge, along with his predecessor, Archibald Alexander, and his successors Archibald Alexander Hodge and Benjamin Breckinridge

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<sup>24</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:858.

<sup>25</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:790-862; Maddex, “Proslavery Millennialism,” 46, 48.

<sup>26</sup>Wilson, “Religion and Patriotism,” *PWW*, 12:476; Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, 13.

<sup>27</sup>Joseph Ruggles Wilson studied under Charles Hodge at Princeton Theological Seminary from 1846 to 1847 where he received his advanced professional training for the Presbyterian ministry. See Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, 4. See also Wilson’s Shorthand Diary, September 10, 1876, in *PWW*, 1:191.

<sup>28</sup>Tad Bennicoff, “When Did the College of New Jersey Change its Name to Princeton University?” [publication on-line], *News and Information* (Princeton: Seeley D. Mudd Manuscript Library, 2003, accessed summer 2011); available at [http://www.princeton.edu/mudd/news/faq/topics/name\\_change.shtml](http://www.princeton.edu/mudd/news/faq/topics/name_change.shtml); Internet.

<sup>29</sup>David Torbett, *Theology and Slavery* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 2006), 58-62. For further reading on Charles Hodge, see John W. Stewart and James H. Moorehead eds., *Charles Hodge Revisited: A Critical Appraisal of His Life and Work* (Grand Rapids: Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), A. A. Hodge, *Life of Charles Hodge, by His Son, Alexander A. Hodge* (London: T. Nelson, 1880), and W. Andrew Hoeffecker, *Piety and the Princeton Theologians: Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin Warfield* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981).

Warfield, developed what became known as the Princeton Theology.<sup>30</sup> It evolved from the “Princeton synthesis”: an intellectual foundation constructed by the college’s sixth president Reverend John Witherspoon that encompassed “Calvinist Evangelical piety, Enlightenment science, and Federalist politics.”<sup>31</sup> As a result, Wilson’s Presbyterian millennialism reflected “a distinctly American and a distinctly nineteenth-century expression of classical Reformed faith” that *combined* individual salvation with national political perfection.<sup>32</sup>

### *The Bible: God’s Infallible Word*

First, Wilson subscribed to the doctrinal premise that the Bible was God’s moral and natural law for humanity: His “eternal principles of right and wrong, of justice and injustice, of civil and religious *liberty*.”<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, men should “recognize no authoritative rule of truth and duty but the word of God” because they were “too nearly upon a par as to their powers of reasoning and ability to discover truth to make the conclusions of one mind an authoritative rule for others.”<sup>34</sup> It was the only sure measure to “bind the conscience” and “regulate the conduct of men.” Consequently, men’s civil

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<sup>30</sup>For further reading on the Princeton Theologians and the Princeton Theology, see Mark A. Noll, ed. *The Princeton Theology, 1812-1921: Scripture, Science, and Theological Method from Archibald Alexander to Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1983) and W. Andrew Hoeffecker, *Piety and the Princeton Theologians: Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin Warfield* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981).

<sup>31</sup>Noll, *Princeton and the Republic, 1768-1822* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 32-53, 140-50, 283-288; Torbett, *Theology and Slavery*, 66-68.

<sup>32</sup>Mark A. Noll, “The Princeton Theology,” in *Reformed Theology in America, A History of Its Modern Development*, ed. David F. Wells (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 15-23-28; Noll, *The Princeton Theology*, 25-40.

<sup>33</sup>Woodrow Wilson, A Religious Essay, “The Bible,” August 25, 1876, in *PWW*, 1:185.

<sup>34</sup>Charles Hodge, “Slavery,” *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* 8, no. 2 (April, 1836): 275.

laws became authoritative only when they reflected the Christian principles contained in the Holy Scripture.<sup>35</sup> Thus, Wilson interpreted the Bible as both “the key to every man’s character . . . , the most perfect rule of life,” and the root from which “every civilized nation [had] taken the foundation of its laws.”<sup>36</sup>

As the “perfect rule of life,” the Bible was also God’s *infallible* word, and as such did not contain any lies, errors, or contradictions. When two biblical truths seemed to contradict one another, as with human free agency and Divine providential control, Wilson understood that such *antinomy*, or *concursum*, did not result from scriptural or providential fallacy but from a human inability to comprehend Divine purpose. The apparent incompatibility required that he accept and follow both concepts, but not necessarily reconcile them.<sup>37</sup> He “saw the intellectual difficulties, but . . . was not troubled by them: they seemed to have no connection with [his] faith in the essentials of

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<sup>35</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:260, 265-66; Torbett, *Theology and Slavery*, 27, 73-76; For further reading on American Evangelicalism, see Jerald C. Brauer, “Conversion from Puritanism to Revivalism,” *Journal of Religion* 58/3 (July 1978): 227-43; Glenn T. Miller, “God’s Light and Man’s Enlightenment: Evangelical Theology of Colonial Presbyterianism,” *Journal of Presbyterian History* 51/2 (summer 1973); Paul K. Conklin, *The Uneasy Center: Reformed Christianity in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1937); Mark Noll, David Bebbington, and George A. Rawlyk, eds., *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, The British Isles, and Beyond, 1700-1990* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>36</sup>Wilson, “The Bible,” *PWW*, 1:185.

<sup>37</sup>Joseph R. Wilson, “Sermon on Malachi 3:17,” date uncertain, in *Woodrow Wilson Papers*, Library of Congress (hereafter referred to as *WWPLC*), quoted in Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 18-20 and “Inaugural Address,” June 1885, in *WWPLC*, in Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 147; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, [book on-line], vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1940, accessed 2010-2011), 50, 578-605; available from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/hodge/theology1.html>; Internet; For further research on antinomy and concursum, see J.I Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downer’s Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1961), 18-19, Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1991), and Benjamin B. Warfield, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Creation,” *Princeton Theological Review* 13, no. 2 (April 1915): 208-211; Benjamin B. Warfield, “The Divine and Human in the Bible,” *The Presbyterian Journal* (May, 1894), in Noll, *The Princeton Theology*, 297-98.

the religion [he had] been taught.” Thus, Wilson was “capable . . . of being satisfied spiritually without being satisfied intellectually.”<sup>38</sup>

Wilson interpreted friction between biblical truths not as an indication that human understanding would remain stagnant, but rather from an organic, or progressive, perspective.<sup>39</sup> Through “the possibility of accretion of that power of growth which belongs to all things that live,” the time would come when “some of these [antinomies]” would “be better *understood*” by men.<sup>40</sup> Presbyterian institutions in the South encouraged and supported research in the natural and physical sciences with the theological understanding that subsequent results would serve to verify the Bible’s account of life and progress and clarify, expand, and in many cases revise, man’s interpretation of biblical scripture. Accordingly, as the “Ptolemaic system of the universe” gave way to the “Copernican system” to explain and understand the Bible “without doing the least violence to its language,” so “the first chapter of Genesis” would be “in full accord with the facts” if “geologists finally prove[d] that [the earth had] existed for myriad ages” rather than “only a few thousands of years.”<sup>41</sup> As I show later, Princeton theologians’ comfort with science prescribed Wilson’s focus on particular scientific theories of societal and political progression to extend and expand his biblical understanding of God’s providence, His natural law, for human political progress.

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<sup>38</sup>Woodrow Wilson, Confidential Journal, December 28, 1889, in *PWW*, 6:462.

<sup>39</sup>Woodrow Wilson, Confidential; Journal, “Political Liberty,” December 29, 1889, in *PWW*, 6:464; Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 19.

<sup>40</sup>Joseph R. Wilson, “Inaugural Address,” *WWPLC*, in Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 150.

<sup>41</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:170-71.

*Common Sense Realism*

Concurrent with Wilson's Presbyterian assumption that the Bible was "free from all error whether of doctrine, fact, or precept" was the doctrinal premise that any person could recognize biblical truth. The Bible was "sufficiently perspicuous to be understood by the people," both the "learned" and the "unlearned," "in the use of ordinary means and by the aid of the Holy Spirit . . . without the need of any infallible interpreter."<sup>42</sup> This supposition resulted from Princeton theology's adherence to Common Sense, or Didactic Enlightenment, realism: a philosophy proposed by eighteenth-century Presbyterian minister and Scottish philosopher Thomas Reid and others to justify that the Bible was an "eminently reasonable document" interpreted through a "rational process."<sup>43</sup> Reid believed that the Enlightenment and Christianity were not mutually exclusive doctrines. He disagreed with the Enlightenment's radical Theory of Ideas strain proposed by early modern thinkers David Hume, John Locke, George Berkeley, and Rene Descartes who

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<sup>42</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:152, 183-87, 191-99; 201 and *The Way of Life*, ed., Mark A. Noll (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 52-59; Torbett, *Theology and Slavery*, 73-74; For further study see Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1979), 235-48.

<sup>43</sup>Torbett, *Theology and Slavery*, 31-33, 74; Works on Thomas Reid include Keith Lehrer, *Thomas Reid* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989); Joseph Houston, ed., *Thomas Reid: Context, Influence, and Significance* (Edinburgh: Dunedin Academic, 2004). For further research on Common Sense realism, see Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *Protestants in an Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977); Sydney Ahlstrom, "The Scottish Philosophy and American Theology," *Church History* 24, no. 3 (September 1955): 257-72; Rogers and McKim, *Authority and Interpretation*, 238, 384; E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) 173-96; Mark Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) 93-113, 233-38; For Common Sense Realism's effect on the American Enlightenment, see Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1976) xvi, 337-57; Noll, *Princeton Theology*, 30-33 and "Charles Hodge as an Expositor of the Spiritual Life," in *Charles Hodge Revisited*, 181-216.



defined reality as ideas generated in the mind. Instead, he postulated that the truthfulness of Christian doctrine contained in the Bible could be verified through scientific means.<sup>44</sup>

Reid proposed a theory of realism based on consensus or, in other words, what people agreed on based on their mutual understanding (*sensus communis*): the “degree of judgment . . . common to men with whom” a person could “converse and contract business.” However, Reid argued, “Before men can reason together, they must agree in first principles, and it is impossible to reason with a man who has no principles in common with you.”<sup>45</sup> Reid did not define this common *sense* as socially-constructed truth: “judgment and belief” concerning such principles to be “acquired by comparing . . . notions together, and perceiving their agreements or disagreements.” Instead, he defined it as innate, based on a set of principles that could not be proven through reasoned analysis yet that existed as the foundation for all knowledge. His examples included “when I feel the pain in the gout of my toe, I have not only a notion of pain, but a belief of its existence, and a belief of some disorder in my toe which occasions it . . . ; it is included in the very nature of the sensation.” According to Reid, “Such original and natural judgments” were the “inspiration of the Almighty” and directed a man “in the

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<sup>44</sup>George Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, ed. Jonathan Dancy, Oxford Philosophical Texts, (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Rene Descartes, *Discourses on the Method*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993), David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature: Being an Attempt to Introduce the Experimental Method of Reasoning into Moral Subjects and Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1874); John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 2 vols., coll. and anno. Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York: Dover Publications, 1959); Thomas Reid, “Preliminary,” essay 1 and “Of Judgment,” essay 6, in *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (Originally published in 1785, reprint, New York: Garland Pub., 1971): 36-17, 497-670; Torbett, *Theology and Slavery*, 32-33.

<sup>45</sup>Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, 520, 36.

common affairs of life,” whereas his “reasoning faculty” would leave him “in the dark.”<sup>46</sup> Reid argued that common sense realism should drive philosophical research and provide the basis “to judge and determine certain things in human conduct to be right, and others to be wrong.” Once the philosophical results verified a common sense or belief, which he assumed as a matter of course, every person would be free to act according to that belief, whether biblical or natural, and therefore become morally responsible for his or her actions related to it.<sup>47</sup>

Bolstered by Reid’s realist philosophy that people could, in Wilson’s words, “comprehend great truths,” that “the judgment of the masses” was “in most cases clear and discriminating to a wonderful degree,” Wilson presupposed that every person experienced biblical truth *in the same way*, regardless of whether he or she rejected it.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, he believed that rejection indicated the inscrutable workings of the Holy Spirit and not a misunderstanding of the truth or physical or racial difference.<sup>49</sup> As a result, he depended on “an inner, personal, and subjective” understanding of biblical and natural, i.e., providential, truth that allowed him to balance the antinomies and arrive at a course of action always based on principle.<sup>50</sup> Thus Wilson could be “unorthodox” in his “reading of the standards of the faith” or the law, but “nevertheless orthodox,” or

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<sup>46</sup>Thomas Reid, *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense*, ed., Derek R. Brookes, The Edinburgh edition (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 215.

<sup>47</sup>Thomas Reid, “Of the Rational Principles of Action,” essay 3, pt 3, in *Essays on the Active Powers of Man* [book on-line], (Edinburgh, Printed for John Bell, Parliament Square, and G.G.J. & J. Robinson, London, 1788, accessed summer 2011), 205-266, 228-230; available from <http://books.google.com/books?q=inauthor%3Athomas+inauthor%3AReid>; Internet.

<sup>48</sup>Woodrow Wilson, A Political Essay, “Some Thoughts on the Present State of Public Affairs,” January 30, 1878, in *PWW*, 1: 352; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:189-99.

<sup>49</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:191-99.

<sup>50</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:183-189; Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 20-21.

obedient, to them.<sup>51</sup> However, because he recognized that man's interpretation of the Bible was fallible, Wilson assumed universal recognition of his subjective truth only until God revealed the interpretation flawed through His providence. Wilson explained his Presbyterian reasoning in a presidential speech to the Pittsburgh Y.M.C.A.:

When you are after something, and have formulated it, and have done the very best thinking you know how to do, you have got to be sure for the time being that that is the thing to do. But you are a fool in the back of your head if you don't know that it is possible you are mistaken. All that you can claim is that that is the thing as you see it now, and that you cannot stand still; that you must push forward the things that are right. It may turn out that you made mistakes, but what you do know is your direction, and you are sure you are moving in that way.<sup>52</sup>

Wilson's thought process allowed him, when well in mind and body, to revise his subjective view related to foreign policy through compromise or accommodation because he was secure in the knowledge that he always acted according to principle, even when the action proved incorrect. Conversely, Wilson clung to it to justify his "intransigent and morally simplistic" behavior when he was ill or in crisis. His Common Sense lens assumed that those around him would see the situation and the solution as he did: what was clear to him would be clear to everyone. His assumptions created difficulties for associates, legislators, and leaders who, unaccustomed to this mode of thinking, interpreted his behavior in foreign affairs as inconsistency or hypocrisy.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Wilson, Confidential Journal, *PWW*, 6:462.

<sup>52</sup>Wilson, "Pittsburgh Y.M.C.A.," *PWW*, 31:226.

<sup>53</sup>John Maynard, Keynes *The Economic Consequences of the Peace*. (1920) (New York: Penguin Books, 1988), 27-55, 50-51; Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 20-21.

### *Optimistic Calvinism*

Wilson's millennialism reflected Princeton Theology's less deterministic interpretation of John Calvin's biblical doctrine that the Protestant reformer advanced in 1536. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin declared God's absolute sovereignty in every aspect of human action, and man's predestined outcome. Based on these premises, he established five doctrinal principles. First, God created man a righteous, moral being in His likeness and image; however, through Adam's transgression in and expulsion from the Garden of Eden all mankind entered mortality in a sinful state morally incapable of choosing a righteous path. Second, man's salvation depended solely upon God's mercy; man could do nothing to bring about his salvation. Third, Jesus Christ atoned for the sins of the elect only. The elect composed those God arbitrarily predestined to justification, or righteousness; man played no role in God's choice. Fourth, God's grace was sufficient to overcome the elect's natural sinful disposition, thus works did not affect the outcome. Fifth, once chosen, the elect remained faithful to the end because God willed it.<sup>54</sup>

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Presbyterianism had evolved from Calvin's original definition of human depravity to an optimistic biblical interpretation of "predestination" and the "elect." American Presbyterian theologians accepted the *Second Helvetic Confession of 1566*, the *Westminster Confession and Catechism A.D. 1647*, and Francis Turretin's *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae* (the Doctrine of Scripture) as their

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<sup>54</sup>Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 159-348, 763-788; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1871), 333; Noll, *Princeton Theology*, 27-30.

religious authority. Each emphasized the concept of free will, or moral agency, as an integral part of man's eternal nature.<sup>55</sup> Subsequently, Wilson understood that because God made man after "his own image" He "endowed him with those attributes which belong[ed] to his own nature as a spirit," defined as "reason, conscience, and will." Thus, man belonged to the "same order and being as God Himself." He was "a rational, moral, and therefore also, a free agent" who could "know God" and "commune" with Him. Accordingly, man was free to choose because his "rational or *spiritual* nature" would naturally lead him to a moral, or righteous, outcome.<sup>56</sup> Thus for Wilson, human agency meant that God gave him the freedom to make the right, but not the wrong, choice.<sup>57</sup>

However, Wilson's God was not Calvin's arbitrary, unforgiving Being that man would forever misunderstand. God was an eternal Parent, "the affectionate head of a *family*,"<sup>58</sup> who governed through love and mercy rather than coercion, and whose "all powerful arm" surrounded his children so that "darkness" never completely "shut out the

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<sup>55</sup>Heinrich Bullinger, *The Second Helvetic Confession A.D. 1566*, in *Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*, vol. 3, *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds, with Translations*, [book on-line], 4<sup>th</sup> ed., rev. and enl., ed. Philip Schaff, Christian Classics Ethereal Library (Harper & Brothers, 1877, reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1977, accessed summer 2011), 233-306; available from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds3.toc.html>; Internet; *Westminster Confession and Catechism A.D. 1647*, in *Creeds of Christendom with a History and Critical Notes*, vol. 3, *The Evangelical Protestant Creeds, with Translations*, [book on-line], 4<sup>th</sup> ed., rev. and enl., ed. Philip Schaff, Christian Classics Ethereal Library (Harper & Brothers, 1877, reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1977, accessed summer 2011), 600-73, 623-24; available from <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/creeds3.toc.html>; Internet; Francis Turretin, "Locus IV: Concerning the Decrees of God on General, and Predestination in Particular," *Intitutio Theologiae Elencticae (The Doctrine of Scripture)*, in *Reformed Dogmatics*, ed. and trans., John W. Beardslee III (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 337-459; Noll, *Princeton Theology*, 28-30, 114-16; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2:278-309.

<sup>56</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2: 96-99.

<sup>57</sup>Henry Wilkinson Bragdon, Woodrow Wilson: The Academic Years (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), 299; Wilson, Confidential Journal, "Political Liberty," 6:463-64; Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 16.

<sup>58</sup>Joseph Ruggles Wilson, "The Doctrine of Hell," *Southern Presbyterian Review* 29, no. 3 (July, 1878): 459-74, 467, quoted in Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, 18.

radiance of” His “loving smiles.”<sup>59</sup> Where Calvin taught that conversion and life-long dedication did not assure a person’s election, Wilson believed that men, as children of God by virtue of their rational nature, received God’s love and kindness and the assurance that He delighted in them as the “special objects of his favour [*sic*] . . . by which to manifest his glory.”<sup>60</sup> God continued to allow men the freedom to choose to believe because their original natures, although compromised as a result of the Fall, remained essentially intact and would naturally lead them to do so. Although men sometimes made unrighteous choices, their conduct did not rescind the Parent-child relationship. God desired to save all mankind from the Fall through “the amazing law of substitution,” in other words, “the blessed Jesus: that sum and substance of God’s completed thoughtfulness . . . ,” for “God’s thoughts” were “thus His best thoughts of pardon and peace.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, wrong choices did not permanently damn individual or societal progression. They might slow things down, but through God’s love and mercy His children would voluntarily choose to return in the end. Because God had “foreknowledge of the free acts of his creatures,” He could predict “events” related to those acts or that were “dependent” upon them. Subsequently, He “purposed” or “determined” those he knew would believe to salvation. Those who chose conversion became the elect through God’s love manifest in His son, Jesus Christ.<sup>62</sup> As a result, American Presbyterians “reversed Calvin’s grim ratio of elect to reprobate” and insured

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<sup>59</sup>Woodrow Wilson, A Religious Essay, “Christian Progress,” August, 1876, in *PWW*, 1:234.

<sup>60</sup>Calvin, *Institutes*, 2:920-987; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2: 96-99, 365-66.

<sup>61</sup>Joseph R. Wilson, “The Doctrine of Hell,” 469 and “Sermon on Psalm 40:17,” March 1, 1885 (Wilson Papers, Library of Congress), quoted in Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, 19-20, 35.

<sup>62</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:401, 404-05.

that the vast majority of humanity, individuals and societies, would be saved rather than lost.<sup>63</sup> The elect would come from every race and every walk of life, “a multitude whom no man can number,” and the “kingdom of the Messiah” would “embrace all the nations of the earth.”<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, because moral agency required that a person understand the notions of right and wrong and the difference between the two, little children could not be morally responsible for their actions. Accordingly, those who died, “baptized or unbaptized, born in Christian or in heathen lands, of believing or unbelieving parents,” received immediate, unconditional salvation.<sup>65</sup>

### *Human Unity*

That Christ included every race for salvation led to another doctrinal premise that influenced Wilson’s millennialism: Princeton theology’s “unity of the human race” doctrine.<sup>66</sup> Wilson understood that the “Caucasian, Mongolian, and African” races were “of one and the same species” based on structure, organs, processes, propagation, and most importantly, “moral and spiritual nature.” They were “all endowed with reason, conscience, and free agency,” had “the same constitutional principles and affections,” and stood “in the same relation to God . . . .” Thus, their “spiritual relationship” to one another, their “common apostasy,” and their “common interest in the redemption of Christ,” placed their “common nature” and “common origin” beyond “all reasonable or

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<sup>63</sup>Torbett, *Theology and Slavery*, 62, 81.

<sup>64</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2:77-91, 362 and 3:810-11.

<sup>65</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1: 26-27; Torbett, *Theology and Slavery*, 62.

<sup>66</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2:77-91.

excusable doubt.”<sup>67</sup> As men lost the knowledge of the true God after the Fall, they became more and more degraded in every other respect. And those who were “driven away from the centres [*sic*] of civilization into inhospitable regions, torrid or arctic, sunk lower and lower in the scale of being.”<sup>68</sup> Those on the lower end who returned to the true God and subsequently to civilization and liberty would likewise require a period of tutelage at least equal in proportion to the time it took for them to sink to those depths. As a result, Wilson viewed Negro slaves as the “*souls of immortal men*” who retained rights that included marriage and family, secular and religious education, specific types of property and protection from abuse.<sup>69</sup> All men, including “the most degraded heathen,” had God’s moral law “written on their hearts” regardless of whether or not an “external revelation of duty existed” and recognized a “sense of moral obligation” and a “knowledge of right and wrong.”<sup>70</sup> Furthermore, man’s “religious nature” separated him from the beasts, which, according to Presbyterian interpretation of the Bible, perished because they lacked a spiritual nature and consisted of only physical matter.<sup>71</sup>

Scholars such as Cooper and Thorsen have used Wilson’s support of his maternal uncle’s position on and comfort with Darwinist evolution to argue that he was a president removed from a theistic, biblical belief of man’s origin and therefore used religion simply

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<sup>67</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2:86-91.

<sup>68</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2:95-96.

<sup>69</sup>James Ruggles Wilson, *Mutual Relation of Masters and Slaves as Taught in the Bible* [publication on-line], 1<sup>st</sup> ed. (Augusta, GA.: Steam Press of Chronicle and Sentinel, 1861, accessed fall 2010), 20; available at <http://www.docsouth.unc.edu/imls/wilson/wilson.html>; Internet.

<sup>70</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:266-67.

<sup>71</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2:96-99.



as a means to political effect.<sup>72</sup> However, as stated earlier, the theology that undergirded Wilson's millennialism welcomed scientific inquiry to expand man's understanding of biblical truth. Furthermore, it held that biblical interpretation was individual and subjective, and required that a man uphold his interpretation until God enlightened him through His providence. Consequently, Wilson accepted scientific and social theories only in so far as they informed his religious belief and outlook. Thus, a closer look at Dr. James Woodrow's interpretation of Darwinism is in order.

An eminent scientist and Presbyterian theologian, James Woodrow argued that the theological distinction between the spiritual nature of man and the physical matter of animals provided a way to reconcile Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory<sup>73</sup> with the biblical account of man's creation from a theistic perspective.<sup>74</sup> Working within a theological framework that incorporated scientific research to "affirm the unity of truth . . . ,"<sup>75</sup> Dr. Woodrow was among the prominent Presbyterian theologians who had begun to accept many of Darwin's findings in the wake of an expanding volume of scientific evidence. Charles Hodge, Joseph R. Wilson's mentor, opened the door when he "conceded" in 1874 that a person could be "an evolutionist and yet not be an atheist"

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<sup>72</sup>James Woodrow, "Speech Before the Synod of South Carolina," October 27-28, 1884, in *Dr. James Woodrow as Seen by His Friends*, comp. Marion Woodrow (Columbia, S.C.: R.L. Bryan Company, 1909), 784.

<sup>73</sup>Charles Darwin, *On The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or The Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859).

<sup>74</sup>James Woodrow, Address, "Evolution," 1884, in *Dr. James Woodrow*, 617-45, 653-68, 721-84, 956-70.

<sup>75</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 1:17-31, 551-55; James Woodrow, "Inaugural Address," 1861, in *Dr. James Woodrow*, 365-87; Noll, *The Princeton Theology*, 142.

who accepted divine “design” and the “doctrine of final causes.”<sup>76</sup> Subsequently, Hodge’s son and successor Archibald Alexander Hodge accepted that nature evolved. However, he maintained that evolution, or any other doctrine of “mere science,” explained the *process* of “phenomena and their fixed relations in time and space” and therefore “had nothing to do with origins, or causes, or final ends.”<sup>77</sup> Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield went further when he applied Darwin’s evolutionary theory to Calvin’s creationist doctrine. According to Warfield’s Calvin, God “acted in the specific mode” of “immediate creation *ex nihilo*” to produce the “souls of men” and “the heavens and the earth,” or the world’s “indigested mass.” All of God’s other “creations” constituted a “lower creation, inclusive . . . of the human body” that He developed by “modification” of the “world-stuff” through “the interaction of its intrinsic forces.” These “second causes” equated to a “pure evolutionism” that produced “the varied forms” of “the ordered world” through “God’s purpose and directive government.”<sup>78</sup> As a result, evolution could not “act as a substitute” for man’s creation but could “supply only a theory of the *method* of the divine providence.”<sup>79</sup>

Concurrent with the Princeton theological movement toward Darwinism as a means to explain God’s creative process related to man, Dr. Woodrow declared that the “definition or description of evolution” did not “include any reference to the power by

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<sup>76</sup>Charles Hodge, *What Is Darwinism?* [book on-line] (New York: Scribners, Armstrong, and Company, 1874, accessed summer 2011), 141, available from <http://name.umd.umich.edu/AGJ4836.0001.001>; Internet; Noll, *The Princeton Theology*, 152; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 2:16.

<sup>77</sup>Archibald Alexander Hodge, “Introduction,” to Joseph S. Van Dyck, *Theism and Evolution* (New York: A.C. Armstrong & Son, 1886), xv-xxii, in Noll, *The Princeton Theology*, 233-237.

<sup>78</sup>Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, “Calvin’s Doctrine of Creation,” *Princeton Theological Review* 13, no. 3 (April 1915):190-255; Noll, *The Princeton Theology*, 294-98.

<sup>79</sup>Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, “On the Antiquity and Unity of the Human Race,” *Princeton Theological Review* 9, no. 1 (January, 1911): 1-25; Noll, *The Princeton Theology*, 289-92.

which the origination” was “effected”; it referred “to the mode, and to the mode alone.”<sup>80</sup> Thus, it did not and could not “affect belief in God or in religion.” Furthermore, it did not “contradict anything” the Bible taught related to “the earth, the lower animals, and probably man as to his body . . . .”<sup>81</sup>

In his defense of evolution, Dr. Woodrow differentiated between man’s soul and his physical body: “As regards the soul of man, which bears God’s image, and which differs so entirely not merely in degree but in kind from anything in the animals, I believe that it was immediately created, . . . and I have not found in science any reason to believe otherwise . . . .”; thus, “there is no such basis for the belief that this doctrine can bridge over the chasm which separates the mirror animal from the exalted being which is made after the image of God.”<sup>82</sup> From this premise he argued that there was no valid reason not to attribute man’s bodily origins to that of the animal species because the Bible did not “intend” a “definitive statement . . . touching the material used in the formation of the man’s body”; it simply referred “in a general incidental way to previously existing matter.”<sup>83</sup> Subsequently, “God created man by adding the human soul . . . to an animal body which he had prepared for it” and, as a result, “Adam as Adam . . . , consisting of body and soul, appeared suddenly on the earth as a miraculous creation.”<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, God revealed “plainly in his word” that “one human body-Eve’s-was certainly not

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<sup>80</sup>Woodrow, “Speech Before the Synod of South Carolina,” *Dr. James Woodrow*, 761.

<sup>81</sup>Woodrow, “Evolution,” *Dr. James Woodrow*, 644.

<sup>82</sup>Woodrow, “Evolution,” *Dr. James Woodrow*, 632-33.

<sup>83</sup>Woodrow, “Evolution,” *Dr. James Woodrow*, 631-32.

<sup>84</sup>James Woodrow, “Questions Answered,” October 7, 1885, in *Dr. James Woodrow*, 808.

formed by Evolution” but supernaturally from the rib of a fully-evolved *and* spiritually-animate Adam.<sup>85</sup> Dr. Woodrow “explicitly repudiated all atheistic forms of evolution” because every process, whether miraculous or natural, revealed “the power of God” that held “particle to particle” and produced “awe . . . ,” that “expanded the soul” with a “new and exalted idea of the mighty Creator . . . a God near at hand.”<sup>86</sup>

Wilson defended his uncle’s theistic interpretation of Darwinism in a speech to the Hartford Theological Seminary. He argued that religion was the “explanation of science and life” and that there was “no explanation or anything” that was “not first or last a spiritual explanation . . . .” Referring to a woman who had read Darwin, he declared, “How arid, how naked, how unsatisfying a thing, merely to know that it is an inexorable process to which we must submit! How necessary for our salvation that our dislocated souls should be relocated in the plan!” Furthermore, “digestion of this dry stuff” was impossible unless it was “conveyed by the living water of the spirit” through the Christian Church. The Church stood “not only at the center of philanthropy but at the center of education, at the center of science, at the center of philosophy, at the center of politics; in short, at the center of sentient and thinking life.” It was the only means to “thread this intricate plan of the universe” and “connect” humanity “with the purpose for which it was made . . . ,” as well as to “show the spiritual relations of men to the great world processes, whether they be physical or spiritual”; in other words, it was “to show

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<sup>85</sup>Woodrow, “Evolution,” *Dr. James Woodrow*, 658; Woodrow, “Speech Before the Synod of South Carolina,” *Dr. James Woodrow*, 765.

<sup>86</sup>Woodrow, “Speech Before the Synod of South Carolina,” *Dr. James Woodrow*, 761,763.

the plan of life and men's relation to the plan of life."<sup>87</sup> Far from espousing an atheistic theory, Wilson maintained the biblical assumption that all mankind descended from one original couple. He simply subscribed to a theistic interpretation of evolution to explain *how* God created the first man and woman, body and spirit, according to the biblical account.

### *Covenant Theology of Politics*

Finally, Wilson's millennialism depended on a covenant, or federal (from the Latin term *foedus*, meaning covenant), "theology of politics"<sup>88</sup> to provide the "integral relationship between liberty and order"<sup>89</sup> required for individual and societal, or political, progress. Founded upon the writings of Swiss Protestant Reformer Heinrich Bullinger, this element of Princeton theology undergirded Scottish, or Covenanter, Presbyterianism prominent in the South.<sup>90</sup> The covenant hearkened back to God's compact with ancient Israel in the Old Testament. It stressed a binding, two-tiered contractual relationship between God and the individual through grace and between God and society through His natural or providential law. A person gained a remission of sins through voluntary obedience to God's will; society progressed in an orderly manner toward perfected

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<sup>87</sup>Woodrow Wilson, An Anniversary Address at the Hartford Theological Seminary, "The Present Task of the Ministry," May 26, 1909, in *PWW*, 19:216-22.

<sup>88</sup>Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, 7-8; Charles S. McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism: Heinrich Bullinger and the Covenantal Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 11-17. For further reading see also Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965); Perry Miller, *The New England Mind* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1932).

<sup>89</sup>Woodrow Wilson, "Democracy," December 5, 1891, in *PWW*, 7:345-69.

<sup>90</sup>McCoy and Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*, 17-28, 39-44; Benbow, *Leading Them to the Promised Land*, 3-4, 6.

government through adherence to God's moral law.<sup>91</sup> Although God did not require nations to follow the covenantal form of governance, He preferred it to all other forms because the Bible contained it.<sup>92</sup>

A covenant differed from a contract or compact because it went beyond man's law and therefore "compelled" the covenanted person to perform the tasks that he believed God required of him.<sup>93</sup> Accordingly, God "revealed" both a "faith" and an "order"; an individual's "attitude" to the one was to "hear and believe," the other, to "hear and obey."<sup>94</sup> Wilson understood the serious nature of God's covenant and the level of responsibility and dedication required of the individual who made it. Although he prayed, read the Holy Bible daily, and consistently attended his father's church services as a boy, he waited until he was sixteen years old to make the covenant. He became an official member of the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia only after he felt confident that he had "exhibited evidences of a work of grace begun" in his heart.<sup>95</sup> Wilson's statement in 1889, "Ever since I have had independent judgments of my own I have been a Federalist," reflected his Presbyterian understanding of the covenant according to its

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<sup>91</sup>Heinrich Bullinger, *A Brief Exposition of the One and Eternal Testament or Covenant of God*, trans. Charles McCoy and J. Wayne Baker, in McCoy and Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*, 101-14.

<sup>92</sup>James Woodrow, "The Work of the Church," October, 1903, in *Dr. James Woodrow*, 358; Benbow, *Leading Them to the Promised Land*, 4.

<sup>93</sup>David J. Elezar, *The Covenant Tradition in Politics*, vol. 1, *Covenant and Polity in Biblical Israel* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 22-23; Benbow, *Leading Them to the Promised Land*, 5.

<sup>94</sup>James Henley Thornwell, *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell, D.D., LL.D.*, ed. J. B. Adger, vol. 4 (Richmond, Va.: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1881), 218, quoted in Luder G. Whitlock Jr., "James Henley Thornwell," in *Reformed Theology in America: A History of Its Modern Development* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1985), 235.

<sup>95</sup>First Presbyterian Church Session Minutes, July 5, 1873, in *PWW*, 1:22-23.

theological definition.<sup>96</sup> Having gained a remission of sins through conversion to Christ and voluntary obedience to God's will, Wilson believed that he had become a soldier for Christ<sup>97</sup> to move God's will for the nations forward through his chosen sphere of influence:

I feel the movement that is in affairs and am conscious of a persistent push behind the present order. It was in keeping with my whole mental makeup, therefore, and in obedience to a true instinct, that I chose to put forth my chief strength in the history and interpretation of institutions, and chose as my chief ambition the historical explanation of the modern democratic state as a basis for the discussion of political progress, political expediency, political morality, political prejudice, practical politics, &c-an analysis of the thought in which our age stands, if it examine itself . . . .<sup>98</sup>

Wilson's desires reflected covenant theology's focus on individual improvement to facilitate natural, organic societal progression toward Christian democratic liberty. This doctrinal aspect rested on the premise that although salvation was "entirely gratuitous," granted "solely on the grounds of the merits of Jesus Christ," the level of "happiness or blessedness of believers in a future life" depended on their "devotion to the service of Christ in this life." In other words, God would "reward everyone according to, although not on account of his works."<sup>99</sup> Wilson stated that merit reflected a "maturity of freedom," a "conduct," whose "only stable foundation" was a "character" developed at home prior to adulthood "in the practice of morality and obedience" and schooled in

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<sup>96</sup>Woodrow Wilson to Albert Bushnell Hart, June 3, 1889, in *PWW*, 6:243.

<sup>97</sup>Wilson, "Christ's Army," *PWW*, 1:180-81.

<sup>98</sup>Wilson, Confidential Journal, *PWW*, 6:462-63.

<sup>99</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:244-45.

“adult self-reliance, self-knowledge, and self-control.”<sup>100</sup> The more an individual improved in character, education, and financial situation through obedience to Christian principles, the greater his degree of liberty. This “growth in Christian graces” through a “work-day religion” applied to “the household and the business office” as well as the Sabbath.<sup>101</sup> It became an “ornament and help to the business man, an unfailing aid to the soldier,” and “the true dignity and motive of the lawyer.” Most importantly for Wilson, it became the “first prerequisite for a statesman . . . .”<sup>102</sup>

The reward of personal liberty enjoined upon the individual a covenantal imperative to “promote the moral, intellectual, and physical improvement of his fellow men” by “following the example and obeying the precepts of Christ . . . ,” the consequences of which raised the “general prosperity of all classes of society” and increased the “sum of human happiness and virtue.”<sup>103</sup> Wilson’s two-fold Christian duty was to “bring himself into such relations with the only Saviour [*sic*] of mankind” so that he “linked” his own future “with all the plans of Providence.”<sup>104</sup> Once he recognized and accepted his earthly calling from God through “obedience to a true instinct,”<sup>105</sup> he had a second duty, “greater than the responsibility of individual salvation.” It was a “patriotic

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<sup>100</sup>Woodrow Wilson, “The Modern Democratic State,” December 1, 1885, in *PWW*, 5:63, 70-71, 78.

<sup>101</sup>Woodrow Wilson, A Religious Essay, “Work-Day-Religion,” August 11, 1876, in *PWW*, 1:177.

<sup>102</sup>Woodrow Wilson, A Religious Essay, “A Christian Statesman,” September 1, 1876 in *PWW*, 1:188.

<sup>103</sup>Charles Hodge, “Slavery,” 302, 304.

<sup>104</sup>Wilson, “Religion and Patriotism,” *PWW*, 12:476.

<sup>105</sup>Wilson, Confidential Journal, *PWW*, 6:463.



duty” as well as a “religious duty,” to “lift other men . . . in that great process of elevation.”<sup>106</sup>

Wilson explained this aspect of American Presbyterianism in an essay titled “The Modern Democratic State.” Because of man’s two-tiered covenant with God as his Lord, man’s “nature,” individual and societal, drew him “towards a fuller realization of his kinship with God.” Consequently politics, as an aspect of man’s societal nature, became a “sphere of moral action”; thus, man could not be “moral” if he was “immoral in *public* conduct.” The “universal emancipation and brotherhood of man” through the fruits of “individual merit” became the “goal of political development” as well as “individual development.”<sup>107</sup>

According to Princeton theology, because the covenant was God’s “divine framework for all human life” and “provide[d] the basis of all social groups,” it flowed through “politics and government no less than family, church, economic relations,” and encompassed civil as well as religious law.<sup>108</sup> Divine will, “. . . fully and clearly written in the Word of God,” was “revealed in the constitution of [man’s] nature” when he chose to enact laws that reflected that will.<sup>109</sup> Wilson argued that “human choice” entered into “laws of the state,” whereas it was “altogether excluded” from “natural laws” which were “dominated by fixed necessity.” He went so far as to call human agency a power that entered “every part of political law to modify it.” It was the “element of change” that

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<sup>106</sup>Wilson, “Religion and Patriotism,” *PWW*, 12:476; Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, 13.

<sup>107</sup>Wilson, “The Modern Democratic State,” *PWW*, 5:84, 90; Woodrow Wilson, Memoranda for “The Modern Democratic State,” December 1-20, 1885, in *PWW*, 5:59.

<sup>108</sup>McCoy and Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*, 52; Benbow, *Leading Them to the Promised Land*, 6.

<sup>109</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:260, 266.

gave the “growth of law a variety, a variability, and an irregularity which no other power could have imparted.”<sup>110</sup> As long as men based their legal systems on God’s moral law for the individual, their laws became authoritative. Thus, a government’s “organic life . . . , institutions, laws, and official action” reflected the “religious principles” at the root national life.<sup>111</sup>

Wilson explained that religion, defined in Presbyterian theology as “the sum of the relations which man sustains to God, and comprises the truths, the experiences, actions, and institutions which correspond to or grow out of those relations . . . ,”<sup>112</sup> was “the sign and seal” of society’s “common blood, the expression of its oneness, its sanctity, its obligation.”<sup>113</sup> Combined with the organization of the family unit, it marked a society’s “character.”<sup>114</sup> A society’s character, in turn, dictated whether or not it progressed to nationhood. Once organized, the nation developed “its own form of organic life, its own organic and functional characteristics . . . expressive of its own character.”<sup>115</sup> It made men “conscious of a common interest, a common vocation, and a common destiny . . . a spirit for all time.” Thus, God’s unwritten moral law lay at the root of “national unity and purpose.”<sup>116</sup> The resultant “*State*” was “*some* form of organic

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<sup>110</sup>Woodrow Wilson, Four General Chapters from *The State*, June 3, 1889 in *PWW*, 6:283.

<sup>111</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:343-44.

<sup>112</sup>Archibald Alexander Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, rev. ed. (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1878), 15, in Noll, *The Princeton Theology*, 212.

<sup>113</sup>Wilson, *The State*, 15.

<sup>114</sup>Wilson, *The State*, 20.

<sup>115</sup>Woodrow Wilson, Notes for Lectures at the John's Hopkins, “ADMINISTRATION,” January 26, 1891, in *PWW*, 7:124-25.

<sup>116</sup>Wilson, “The Modern Democratic State,” *PWW*, 5:69.

political life being in every instance commanded by the very nature of man” as a moral being. It was “*the eternal, natural embodiment and expression of a higher form of life than the individual*” that made “individual life possible and . . . full and complete.”<sup>117</sup> Law was the state’s “*organic product*” that “*gained distinct and formal recognition in the shape of uniform rules backed by the power and authority of Government . . .*” Its “object” was, among other things, “religion” and “morality.” Consequently, a nation could not exist without “an organic common life” or remain a nation once it severed the “continuity” of that “organic common life.”<sup>118</sup>

According to Presbyterian millennialist doctrine, government institutions that included “monarchy, aristocracy, democracy” and even “domestic slavery” were means to facilitate society’s improvement “or the reverse.” They were not “straight-jackets to be placed upon the public body to prevent its free development.” Their “great duty” was the “constant and assiduous cultivation of the best interest (knowledge, virtue and happiness) of the people.” The English-speaking Protestant nations, where Christianity had free scope,” reaped the “benefits” of its principles “being even imperfectly obeyed” because it “allowed” the “natural progression of society” to “freely . . . expand itself” and “grow erect and in its natural shape.” Christianity eventually “abolished both political and domestic bondage” because the “gradual improvement of the people rendered it impossible, and undesirable to deprive them of their just share in government.” The “feudal serf, first became a tenant, then a proprietor invested with political power.” On the other hand, “the degradation of most eastern nations, and of Italy and Spain, and

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<sup>117</sup>Wilson, “ADMINISTRATION,” *PWW*, 7:124-25. (Wilson’s emphasis)

<sup>118</sup>Woodrow Wilson, Notes for Three Lectures, “I. Nature of the State and Its Relations to Progress,” July 2, 1894 in *PWW*, 8:597-600. (Wilson’s emphasis)

Ireland” provided “striking examples” of the consequences heaped upon a society that violated Christian principles. Its natural growth became “crooked, knotted, and worthless” because God would not allow men to alter His laws.<sup>119</sup>

As a result, democratic institutions were to be granted “just so far and so fast” as their necessity to a nation’s improvement became apparent.<sup>120</sup> Wilson wrote that men “wrongly conceived” democracy when they treated it as “merely a body of doctrine.” It represented a “stage of development” in a nation’s character “built up by slow habit.” As with a particular form of character, it could not be “adopted” nor could “immature peoples” get it. Both required development “by conscious effort and through transmitted aptitudes.”<sup>121</sup> Liberty was the “privilege of maturity, of self-control, of self-mastery and a thoughtful care for righteous dealings . . . .” Discipline “generations deep” gave men “an ineradicable love of order,” a “spirit” to “obey . . . before they could be Americans.”<sup>122</sup> Thus it was no “accident” that “the English race” was “the only race” in the “fierce contests of national rivalries” to succeed in “the most liberal forms of popular govt.” Only it “approached popular institutions *through habit*.”<sup>123</sup>

Wilson’s negative American Presbyterian view of non-English-speaking European democracies resulted from English Protestant antagonism toward the Roman Church. According to the *Actes and Monuments of Matters Most Speciall and*

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<sup>119</sup>Hodge, “Slavery,” 299-305.

<sup>120</sup>Hodge, “Slavery,” 301.

<sup>121</sup>Wilson, “The Modern Democratic State,” *PWW*, 5:63.

<sup>122</sup>Woodrow Wilson, A Commemorative Address, “The Ideals of America,” December 26, 1901, in *PWW*, 12:218-221.

<sup>123</sup>Wilson, “The Modern Democratic State,” *PWW*, 5:63. (Wilson’s emphasis)

*Memorable*, popularly known as the *Book of Martyrs*, it was English Christians, of all Christendom during the dark ages, who defended the true, unsullied, gospel to the greatest degree.<sup>124</sup> Written by the Puritan reformer John Foxe, the *Actes and Monuments* heavily influenced the English nation's understanding of Roman Christianity and the Church's centralized government.<sup>125</sup> It legitimized an Anglo-Saxon medieval legend created to strengthen the English king's authority against the Pope. Lent credence by, among others, Tertullian's mention of British Christianity in the early second century, the legend told that the "first origine & planting of the [Christian] faith" in Britain did not arrive from Rome with the Benedictine monk Augustine (later the first Archbishop of Canterbury) in 595. It arrived four hundred and fifty years earlier with "Ioseph of Aramathie . . . ," the man who donated his tomb for Christ's burial, and others who followed him. Despite future wickedness within the church that led to Britain's overthrow by the Saxons, a remnant of the true church continued in the land and could not be extinguished by the Roman Church's "papisty and Idolatry." "Christes religion" had "continually from time to time sparkled abroad," and "neuer so perfectly burst out"

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<sup>124</sup>John Foxe, *The Unabridged Acts and Monuments Online* [book on-line], 1583 ed. (Sheffield: HRI Online Publications, 2011, accessed August 2011); available from <http://www.johnfoxe.org>; Internet. For more on nineteenth-century American Protestant nativism, see Henry F. May, *Protestant Churches and Industrial America* (New York: Harper, 1949); Ray Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860: A Study of the Origins of American Nativism* (New York: Macmillan, 1938); Richard H. Niehber, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1937); Sacvan Bercovitch, "Typology in Puritan New England: The Williams-Cotton Controversy Reassessed," in *American Quarterly* 2, no. 2, part 1 (Summer, 1967): 161-191; Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966); Perry Miller, *The Life of the Mind in America: From the Revolution to the Civil War* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965).

<sup>125</sup>For more on John Foxe and the English Reformation see J. F. Mozley, *John Foxe and His Books* (New York: Octagon Books, 1970); D.M. Loades, ed., *John Foxe and the English Reformation* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Brookfield, Vt., USA: Scholar Press, 1997) and *John Foxe: An Historical Perspective* (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1999); Christopher Higley, *John Foxe and His World* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2002).

as during the Reformation. From John Wycliffe, the “morning Star of the Reformation” and its first martyr, to William Tyndall, Robert Barnes, John Frith, and many others, the English struggle against the Roman Church’s control of government infused the Anglo Saxon myth with a sense of mission.<sup>126</sup> The subsequent destruction of the Spanish Armada in 1588 under Elizabeth I and the Glorious Revolution of 1688 that instituted constitutional monarchy under William III validated the sense of mission on a national scale. As transplants of “the principal nation of the Reformation,” the Puritans and other Protestant groups carried the seedling of liberty and mission to the New World, where it found fertile soil to flower in the form of Christianized democracy.<sup>127</sup>

Thus, Wilson wrote, the “political institutions of the United States” were “in the main the political institutions of England, transplanted by English colonists to a new soil and worked out through a fresh development to new and characteristic forms.”<sup>128</sup> From the first, American democracy had a “truly organic growth.” Liberty was an “organic principle, a principle of life, renewing and being renewed.” Democratic institutions, “like living tissue,” continued to progress.<sup>129</sup> Alternatively, radical revolution made a mockery of liberty because, bereft of order, it had always invited retaliation and returned a nation “to even less than the normal speed of political movement.”<sup>130</sup> Consequently, democracy in other nations “acted always in rebellion”: as a “quick intoxicant or a slow poison to

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<sup>126</sup>Foxe, *Unabridged Acts and Monuments*, 55, 76, 129, 682.

<sup>127</sup>Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation*, 137-75; Edwards, *History of the Work of Redemption*, 432; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:343-44.

<sup>128</sup>Wilson, *The State*, 438-39.

<sup>129</sup>Woodrow Wilson, “Nature of Democracy in the United States,” May 10-16, 1889, in *PWW*, 6:228-9.

<sup>130</sup>Wilson, *The State*, 555.

France and Spain,” and a “mere maddening draught to the South American States.”<sup>131</sup>

The American Revolution was the sole exception: “There was nothing revolutionary in its movements: it had not to overthrow other polities: it had only to organize itself. It had, not to create, but only to expand self-government.”<sup>132</sup> Thus, the colonial leaders “did not mean to *invent* the American government, but only to Americanize the English government, which they *knew*, and knew to be a government fit for free men to live under, if only narrow monarchical notions could be got out of it, and its spirit liberalized.”<sup>133</sup> They simply *facilitated* the living, organic process of political progress.

Woodrow Wilson’s Americanized millennialist understanding provided a historical as well as a spiritual explanation for his religious outlook of man as a free, moral, progressive agent and the subsequent rise of the United States as the nation to lead all others to a perfected Christian state. It comprised English Protestantism’s biblical interpretation of world history adapted to Princeton Theology’s less deterministic doctrine of salvation, reliance on Common Sense realism, and covenant relationships. Two important questions inform the research at this point. How did Wilson’s Southern environment, education, and experience influence his religious view of man’s agency to choose? What effect did Wilson’s mature religious lens have on his definition of political leadership?

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<sup>131</sup>Wilson, “The Modern Democratic State,” *PWW*, 5:63, 67.

<sup>132</sup>Wilson, “Nature of Democracy,” *PWW*, 6:228-9.

<sup>133</sup>Wilson, “Democracy,” *PWW*, 7:350.

## POLITICAL AND SOCIAL EVOLUTION OF WILSON'S MILLENNIALISM

The Southern environment that nurtured Wilson as a child clothed and expanded his Americanized millennialism into the political arena. The South's overwhelming Protestant population in the nineteenth century composed a political majority that took an orthodox Christian view of public service.<sup>1</sup> The Southern Presbyterian Church (PCUS) magnified this view through its adherence to covenant relationships that it taught lay at the root of politically, as well as religiously, organized society.<sup>2</sup> As stated clerk of the General Assembly, Joseph R. Wilson exposed young Woodrow to the constitutional and political aspects of church government and Christianity's influence on public policy through the many community discussions that took place in the Wilson home.<sup>3</sup> Certain political concepts that Southern Presbyterian church governance developed from seventeenth-century Protestant beliefs augmented covenant theology to provide Wilson with a comprehensive religious basis for national liberty.

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<sup>1</sup>James Farmer Jr., *The Metaphysical Confederacy: James Henley Thornwell and the Synthesis of Southern Values* (Macon, Ga., Mercer University Press, 1986), 285-86.

<sup>2</sup>McCoy and Baker, *Fountainhead of Federalism*, 80-89, 94-96; Benbow, *Leading Them to the Promised Land*, 6; Morton Smith, "The Southern Tradition," in *Reformed Theology in America: A History of Its Modern Development*, ed. David F. Wells (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1885), 198-202.

<sup>3</sup>Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, 7-22, 31-38, 270-71; Benbow, *Leading Them to the Promised Land*, 3. See also John Mulder, "Joseph Ruggles Wilson: Southern Presbyterian Patriarch," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 52 (1974): 245-71.



### *Checks and Balances*

First, man's vulnerability to temptation required a system of checks and balances among several entities to insure that an individual's actions would not spoil or degrade God's purpose, even when God called that individual to carry out His purpose. God's plan to justify all mankind through "a limited probation of the whole race in the person of one man" introduced the concept of representation: in the first case with Adam as the "federal head of his race" through a covenant of works, and in the subsequent case with Jesus Christ as the "federal head of his seed" through a covenant of grace.<sup>4</sup>

Representation as part of the covenant's social, political governance reined in anarchy among and between all groups that comprised the whole. It facilitated free and open discussion to reach consensus upon which to establish covenants that ideally touched everyone and reflected the people's best moral judgment. Consequently, Wilson believed that political organizations, as representatives of the people, "should be . . . an instrument of . . . discussion"<sup>5</sup> and understood political parties to mean "little except when the nation [was] using that party for a large and definite purpose."<sup>6</sup>

### *Inclusion*

The concept that all groups be included developed from the nineteenth-century Presbyterian covenant belief that God desired everyone to be saved, rather than an

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<sup>4</sup>James Henley Thornwell, *The Collected Writings of James Henley Thornwell, D.D., LL.D.*, ed. J. B. Adger, II (Richmond, Va.: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1886), 17-18, quoted in Morton H. Smith, *Studies in Southern Presbyterian Theology* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1987), 146; Benbow, *Leading Them to the Promised Land*, 6-7.

<sup>5</sup>Woodrow Wilson, "Notes for Lectures on a Course on Elements of Politics," March 5, 1898, in *PWW*, 10:466.

<sup>6</sup>Woodrow Wilson, "Inaugural Address," March 4, 1913, in *PWW*, 27:148.

arbitrarily chosen few. In the covenant's social or political aspect, democracy, like justification, held universal application: anyone who met the requirements received the reward. In turn, "... the life of society, the life of the world" received "great sources of strength . . . rising in new generations." This "new fiber" then supplied the "red blood" necessary to choose those leaders who would best represent the expanding whole, not because they came through "the blood of a particular family or through the process of particular training" but as a result of their own "native impulse and genius." According to Wilson, "The beauty of popular institutions is that" the people "don't know where the man is going to come from and" they "don't care so he is the right man." He may come from the "avenue" or the "alley", the "city" or the "farm." Therefore, "the humblest hovel may produce" their "greatest man": one who moves to the head of the crowd and calmly calls, "'Here am I; follow me,'" whose voice will be the people's voice and whose thought will be the people's thought, and the people "will follow him as if" they "were following the best things" in themselves.<sup>7</sup>

### *The Great Commission*

Inclusion facilitated a missionary impulse to flood the earth with the message of spiritual and national freedom. Because God offered his two-fold covenant of salvation and democracy to everyone, He commissioned those already elected to "Go . . . into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature . . .," "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father" as part of their

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<sup>7</sup>Wilson, Pittsburgh Y.M.C.A., *PWW*, 31:224; Benbow, *Leading Them to the Promised Land*, 7.

covenantal duty.<sup>8</sup> Wilson believed in “the democracy . . . of every awakened people” that hoped and worked “to govern its own affairs” because he believed that the “moral judgment would be the last judgment, the final judgment, in the minds of men as well as the tribunal of God.”<sup>9</sup> During the Mexican crisis Wilson argued that “when properly directed,” there was “no people not fitted for self-government”; to think otherwise was “as wickedly false” as it was “palpably absurd.”<sup>10</sup> The bastion of God’s democratic governance embodied with His “visions of liberty,” the United States of America was, according to Wilson, “chosen, and prominently chosen, to show the way to the nations of the world” how to walk “in the paths of liberty.”<sup>11</sup> The “light” that America shined upon “all generations” through its righteous example of God’s national freedom would motivate “mankind” to reach that “goal of “justice and liberty and peace.”<sup>12</sup>

### *Germ Theory*

Wilson utilized particular scientific and historical theories of societal political progression during his academic preparation to expand his Presbyterian millennialist understanding. While a graduate student at Johns Hopkins, Wilson embraced the germ theory of politics. Under the tutelage of historian Dr. Herbert Baxter Williams, he developed a racial hierarchy of Western Christianized peoples and their civilizations. His

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<sup>8</sup>Matthew 24:14 and 28:19-20 KJV; Mark 13:10 and 16:15KJV; Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:801, 804-05; Benbow, *Leading Them to the Promised Land*, 7.

<sup>9</sup>Woodrow Wilson, A Fourth of July Address, July 4, 1914, in *PWW*, 30:254.

<sup>10</sup>Samuel Blythe, An Interview, “Mexico: The Record of a Conversation With President Wilson by Samuel G. Blythe,” April 27, 1914, in *PWW*, 29:522.

<sup>11</sup>Woodrow Wilson, A Campaign Address in Jersey City, New Jersey, May 25, 1912, in *PWW*, 24:443.

<sup>12</sup>Woodrow Wilson, A Fourth of July Address, *PWW*, 30:255.

hierarchy highlighted the “Teutonic” or “Aryan races” in England and Germany as the originators of American political institutions. Coupled with what Wilson characterized as the less advanced “Semitic races,” whose connection to the “Aryan” peoples occurred in the “earlier stages” of “social organization . . .,” they “played the chief parts in the history of the European world . . .” Conversely, the “dead” or “defeated” institutions of the Hottentot or Iroquois, Finn or Turk,” although required to trace government “in all its forms” to a “common archetype . . .,” added little to “an understanding of those . . . alive and triumphant.” The “stronger and nobler races . . . made the most notable progress in civilization” and resulted in “the dominating types . . . grown . . . to full flower in the political world.” Their “patriarchal traditions” and “invigorating and sustaining religions” led them to the “choicest districts of the earth” while “all others thrust out into the heats or the colds of the less-favored continents, or crowded into the forgotten corners and valley-closets of the world.”<sup>13</sup>

### *Frontier Thesis*

Wilson found that there were aspects of *U.S.* progression that germ theory failed to explain, specifically the unique character of American politics and the “growth of the national idea and habit.” Although English in origin, these aspects reflected influences “of a particular legal status and of unexampled physical surroundings” that needed clarification to “discover the bases” of American “law and constitutions . . . constructive statesmanship and . . . practical politics.”<sup>14</sup> The answers came subsequent to meeting a

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<sup>13</sup>Wilson, *The State*, 1-2, 19-20, 364-65, 438-39. Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, 6-7.

<sup>14</sup>Woodrow Wilson, “Bryce’s American Commonwealth,” January 31, 1889, in *PWW*, 6:72, 74.

young graduate student named Frederick Jackson Turner while Wilson was a lecturer at Johns Hopkins in the spring of 1889.

At the time Wilson met Turner, he ignored ideas about the frontier's effect on America's development. Through discussions with the future historian, the Southerner Wilson discovered a kindred spirit in the Westerner Turner. Both deplored the denigration of their respective geographic regions in history and subscribed to the opinion that western expansion played a key role in the growth of nationalism. Consequently, the two men postulated on the effects of expansion in other areas of U.S. progression.<sup>15</sup> The ideas they generated became key foundational elements in Turner's 1893 thesis, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History."<sup>16</sup> The ideas also prompted Wilson to place less emphasis on European heredity and concentrate on the American West to underscore, in the words of Turner, "the doctrine of American *development*, in contrast to Germanic *germs*."<sup>17</sup> Wilson continued to espouse a "unidirectional progress from barbarism to civilization" in terms of racial hierarchy; however, he determined that by 1829 "[a] new nation had been born and nurtured into self-reliant strength in the West." Under the leadership of Andrew Jackson, "wholly a product of frontier life," the

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<sup>15</sup>Ray Allen Billington, *Genesis of the Frontier Thesis: A Study in Historical Creativity* (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1971), 5-6, 27, 30-31, 157-60, 181-201, 213, 234-36, 275, 291, 295. See also Wendell H. Stephenson, "The Influence of Woodrow Wilson on Frederick Jackson Turner," *Agricultural History* 19 (Oct. 1945).

<sup>16</sup>Frederick Jackson Turner, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1956).

<sup>17</sup>Turner to Wilson, July 16, 1893, in *PWW*, 8:278-79; Turner to Wilson, December 20, 1893, in *PWW*, 8:417 (Turner's emphasis).

presidencies of the “old-world politicians” ended and “a distinctively American order of politics, begotten of the crude forces of a new nationality” evolved.<sup>18</sup>

### *Social Control*

To insure the continued natural progress of this “rough and ready democracy,” Wilson advocated social control as a means to reduce potential threats to America’s divine call posed by unregulated immigration.<sup>19</sup> He ruminated over the steady flow of Central and Eastern Europeans desperate to begin a new life in the land of freedom and opportunity. Their “feverish habits of the restless old world” and “radical speculative habit in politics” threatened to corrupt American “temperate blood, schooled to self-possession and to the measured conduct of self-government” hard won on the frontier. The “dangers” of fragmentation that attended “heterogeneity in so vast an organism” as the United States led Wilson to proscribe pluralism.<sup>20</sup> Yet despite a racial view that seemed to support a restrictive policy, he chose to promote immigrants’ assimilation in the American way of life. According to his Presbyterian teaching, all people were welcome. Thousands had come to U.S. shores who were “neither Protestants nor Christians.” Many were “papists,” “Jews,” “infidels,” and “atheists.” They had “equal rights and privileges.” They were “allowed to acquire property, and to vote in every election, made eligible to all offices, and invested with equal influence in all public affairs.” They were “allowed to worship . . . or not to worship at all,” as they chose.

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<sup>18</sup>Woodrow Wilson, *Division and Reunion, 1829-1889* (New York: Longmans, Green, 1898), 2-3, 10-11, 23, 118; Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, 3-8.

<sup>19</sup>Wilson, *Division and Reunion*, 118.

<sup>20</sup>Wilson, “Nature of Democracy,” *PWW*, 6:233-35; Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, 9-10.

They were not “required to profess any form of faith, or to join any religious association.”<sup>21</sup> As a result, Wilson elected to protect the country’s divine global mission *and* fulfill its promise of American freedom and advancement to all those who chose to come to its shores.<sup>22</sup> The nation had come to its “maturity” through “homogeneity of race and community of thought and purpose among the people.” It was habituated to self-government and could “absorb alien elements,” as it had done in the past.<sup>23</sup> “Men out of every European race, men out of Asia, men out of Africa” had come. The “mixture of races” had contributed to the “separateness and distinctive character of the United States among the nations.” But the foreign stocks “had quickly lost their identity” as they “merged their individuality in a national character already formed . . .” They had been “dominated, changed, absorbed.”<sup>24</sup>

Wilson adhered to his enhanced millennialist lens related to assimilation. Methods varied relative to a person’s position on his hierarchic scale of peoples and civilization. Individuals at the upper end who came from Wilson’s definition of progressive civilized nations were *at liberty* to assimilate as quickly as they chose. Those at the lower end of the scale required greater control through limited freedom and strong punitive measures to first civilize them. Possible assimilation lay in a distant future. To give to one the “liberties” of another was to give the “gift of character,” which was “a

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<sup>21</sup>Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:345-46.

<sup>22</sup>Wilson, “Nature of Democracy,” *PWW*, 6:235-39.

<sup>23</sup>Wilson, “The Modern Democratic State,” *PWW*, 5:74-75.

<sup>24</sup>Woodrow Wilson, A Preface to an Historical Encyclopedia, “The Significance of American History,” September 9, 1901, in *PWW*, 12:183.

thing built up by the contrivance of no single generation, but by the slow providence” which bound “generations together by a common training.”<sup>25</sup>

Wilson applied his millennialist lens equally to the world’s nations. The use of force against any progressive nation was sanctioned only as an interim measure to ensure lasting peace. For other nations, the natural, orderly path to democracy would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve without long-term intervention and tutelage. They could “have liberty no cheaper” than what it cost the American nation to attain. They required the “discipline of law,” to learn to “love order and instinctively yield to it.” Primitive peoples’ un-Christianized, uncivilized natures required overseership from the more advanced Western European countries with the background, experience, and genetic makeup to facilitate their entrance into the world community. As the “apostles of liberty and of self-government,” Americans had “given pledges to the world” to “redeem” the people” as they could. To “infinitely shorten their tutelage,” America would make certain that the law of obedience was “just” and even-handed . . . ,” that “justice” was “free and unpurchasable [*sic*].” She would “make order lovely . . . the friend of every man.” She would “teach them” by “fairness in administration” the “power in government” that “does not act for its own aggrandizement, but is the guarantee that all shall fair alike.” America’s “pride” and “conscience” would not suffer her “to give them less.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Wilson. A Preface to an Historical Encyclopedia, *PWW*, 12:183-84.

<sup>26</sup>Wilson, “The Ideals of America,” *PWW*, 12:217, 221-22.



*The Servant-Leader: Mouthpiece Between God and Nation*

The heavy responsibilities that rested upon the United States in its millennialist role required strong leadership. Wilson understood this aspect of Southern Presbyterianism to mean “a man of personal integrity and principle, who, through the commanding influence of his ideas and personality, could win the allegiance of others and guide nations.”<sup>27</sup> President William McKinley’s successful bid to forcibly remove the last vestige of Old World Europe from the New American hemisphere signaled for Wilson the beginning of America’s redemptive mission to the world’s nations. McKinley had taken the brave step to “free” the less-civilized peoples of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines from Spanish “slavery” and reform them according to natural, orderly progress. He transferred the domestic policy of assimilation to the former Spanish colonies in the form of a paternalistic imperialism that provided for the American “apostles of liberty and self-government” to instruct them in the ways of democracy.<sup>28</sup> Finally, the President stopped short of capturing Spain itself. He remained faithful to the Spanish people’s right as a progressive civilized nation to choose to join the New World under American leadership or remain a member of the Old World for the time being.

McKinley’s “plunge into the international politics and into the administration of distant dependences” was the war’s “most striking and momentous consequence.” It indicated that the President of the United States alone could provide effective leadership for the modern world. His was “the only national voice in affairs.” He was “the

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<sup>27</sup>Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, p. 53; Wilson, “The Ideal Statesman”, January 30, 1877, in *PWW*, 1:241-45; Woodrow Wilson, *Two Outlines of Speeches*, “Independent Conviction: Analysis-(Speech),” July 16, 1877, in *PWW*, 1:279-80.

<sup>28</sup>Woodrow Wilson, *A History of the American People*, 5 vols. (New York and London: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1902), 5:274-75, 299; Wilson, “The Ideals of America,” *PWW*, 12: 217, 221-27.

representative of no constituency, but of the whole people.” He was a president the people could trust “not only lead it, but form it to his own views.” Thus, he “must utter every initial judgment, take every first step of action, supply the information upon which it is to act, suggest and in large measure control its conduct.” The man to fill the role would be “to the country in some sort an embodiment of the character and purpose” what it wanted its “government to have, a man who understood “his own day and the needs of the country,” and who had the “personality and the initiative to enforce his views upon the people and upon Congress.”<sup>29</sup>

The idea that Wilson might be such a leader originated in his early childhood and evolved through his academic years. From the moment of Wilson’s birth, his family held high hopes for him. His uncle James Woodrow observed: “That baby is dignified enough to be the Moderator of the Great Assembly.”<sup>30</sup> Encouraged by his father to be a servant of God as a leader of men, Wilson gravitated toward politics rather than the ministry in his late teens. True to his Presbyterian principles, Wilson penned his personal desires in a “solemn covenant” with fellow student Charles A. Talcott to “acquire knowledge” to have “power,” and to “drill” themselves “in all the arts of persuasion, but especially in oratory,” to have “facility in leading others” to their “ways of thinking” and “enlisting them” in their “purposes.”<sup>31</sup> The purposes, in Wilson’s view, were the right purposes: tasks devolved upon him by God in the purview of politics.

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<sup>29</sup>Woodrow Wilson, *Congressional Government*: 1885, 15<sup>th</sup> ed. reprint 1900 (Piscataway, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2002), lxi-lxii; Woodrow Wilson, *Constitutional Government* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1917), 65-68, 77-78; Woodrow Wilson, A Treatise, “Constitutional Government in the United States,” March 24, 1908, in *PWW*, 18:113-15, 120-21.

<sup>30</sup>Wilson to Ellen Axson Wilson, July 20, 1902, in *PWW*, 14:29; Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, 29.

<sup>31</sup>Mulder *Years of Preparation*, 52-56; Wilson, “The Ideal Statesman,” *PWW*, 1:241-45; Wilson to Ellen Axson, October 30, 1883, in *PWW*, 2:499-500.

Wilson studied and wrote about leaders who included Carlyle, Bismark, Frederick the Great, Daniel Webster, William Pitt, and Abraham Lincoln; however, his hero was William Gladstone.<sup>32</sup> Like Wilson, Gladstone was a deeply religious man who held to his Scottish Presbyterian heritage for most of his adult life, despite membership in the Church of England. He turned down an opportunity to enter the ministry and instead chose to serve God in politics. Like Wilson, Gladstone believed in personal interpretation of the Bible and individual conscience as the ultimate authority to guide one's actions. And like Wilson, his religious lens guided him from a politically conservative to a liberal outlook.<sup>33</sup> Wilson described him as a man "whose works" had been "the works of progress; whose impulses" had been "the impulses of nobility; whose purposes" had been "the purposes of patriotism; whose days" had been blessed by a genius . . . fired by devotion, tempered by discretion, purified by piety, and sanctioned by

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<sup>32</sup>Woodrow Wilson, A Speech, "The Ideal Statesman," January 30, 1877, in *PWW*, 1:241-245; Woodrow Wilson, Outlines of a Speech, "Thomas Carlyle," July 16, 1877, in *PWW*, 1:280-81; Woodrow Wilson, A Biographical Essay, "Prince Bismark," November, 1877, in *PWW*, 1:307-13; Woodrow Wilson, A Speech, "Bismark," December 6, 1877, in *PWW*, 1:325-328; Woodrow Wilson, Draft of an Unfinished Biographical Essay, "Daniel Webster and William Pitt," August 10, 1878, in *PWW*, 1:396-97; Woodrow Wilson, A Biographical Essay, "William Earl Chatham," October 1878, in *PWW*, 1:407-12; Woodrow Wilson, A Biographical Essay, "John Bright," March 6, 1880, in *PWW* 1:608-21; Woodrow Wilson, A Biographical Essay, "Mr. Gladstone, A Character Sketch," April 1880, in *PWW*, 1:624-42; Woodrow Wilson, An Address, "Leaders of Men," June 17, 1890, in *PWW*, 6:646-71; Woodrow Wilson, An Historical Essay, "A Calendar of Great Americans," September 15, 1893, in *PWW*, 8:368-80; Woodrow Wilson, An Address in Chicago on Lincoln, "Abraham Lincoln: A Man of the People," February 12, 1909, in *PWW*, 19:33-46.

<sup>33</sup>David William Bebbington, *William Ewart Gladstone: Faith and Politics in Victorian Britain* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993); Agatha Ramm, *William Ewart Gladstone*, (Cardiff: GPC, 1989) and "Gladstone's Religion," *Historical Journal* 28, no. 2 (Jun., 1985): 327-340.

love.”<sup>34</sup> Looking to Gladstone as “the greatest statesman that ever lived,” Wilson predicted: “I intend to be a statesman, too.”<sup>35</sup>

As a leader, Wilson determined like his hero Gladstone to “throw himself, as if by instinct, on that side of every public question which, in the face of present doubts,” would “in the long run . . . prove the side of wisdom and of clear-sighted policy.” He would also be unafraid to evolve in the wake of new truths.<sup>36</sup> This statement reflected Wilson’s religious understanding of antinomy that he would not always correctly interpret God’s truth, but that as long as he strove to the end to fulfill the task to which he had been divinely called, God would eventually reveal the true meaning to him and he would adjust accordingly.

His experience as President of Princeton University from 1902 to 1912 validated for Wilson the belief that he stood as the embodiment of the servant-leader. The people’s decision to choose him reflected their natural orderly progress to political perfection. There was “no interest served” that was a “personal interest.” The people were there “to serve” the “country and mankind,” and they knew that they could “put selfishness” behind them.<sup>37</sup> True to his Christian statesman ideals, Wilson implemented reforms in the first four years that raised Princeton to national academic prominence. His subsequent fight with the University alumni over clubs, the Quad plan, and a graduate

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<sup>34</sup>Wilson, “Mr. Gladstone,” *PWW*, 1: 642.

<sup>35</sup>Jessie Bones Brower to Ray Stannard Baker (the Author), in *WWLL*, 1:57; Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, 40.

<sup>36</sup>Wilson, “Mr. Gladstone,” *PWW*, 1:628-35; Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, 64-66.

<sup>37</sup>News Report of an Alumni Luncheon, June 14, 1902, in *PWW*, 12:421.

school prompted Wilson to shift his understanding as to who was fit to lead the people.<sup>38</sup> The educated elite, once Wilson's pool of future statesmen, now became the enemy, men to be avoided with their partisan views and wealth that bought political power to the people's detriment. As a result, Wilson's 1909 Christian statesman constituted "a man of the people" who saw "affairs" as "people" saw them, "and not as a man of particular classes or the professions" saw them, a man who "felt beat in him . . . a universal sympathy for those who struggle, a universal understanding of the unutterable things that were in their hearts and the unbearable burdens that were upon their backs."<sup>39</sup> Wilson had fought the common man's fight against the selfishness of privilege in its own backyard and, although beaten, had stayed true to his Presbyterian belief that "the spirit of American life" recognized "no privilege or preference not bestowed by nature herself."<sup>40</sup>

Wilson interpreted his nomination for New Jersey Governor in 1910 as a providential sign that he had acted appropriately during his leadership crises from 1906 to 1910. His eight years at Princeton University had tested his religious faith and resolve to fulfill his divinely-bestowed call in a fiery furnace of political affliction. As a result, providence removed him from Princeton to become the servant-leader through whom the "present generation" could write "its political *autobiography* . . . ."<sup>41</sup> Wilson emerged

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<sup>38</sup>For more on the crises that Wilson faced during the second half of his administration at Princeton University, including source material, see Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, 187-268.

<sup>39</sup>Wilson, "Abraham Lincoln," *PWW*, 19:41-44.

<sup>40</sup>Woodrow Wilson, "The Country and Colleges," February 24, 1910, in *PWW*, 20:160-61; Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, 276.

<sup>41</sup>Wilson, Confidential Journal, *PWW*, 6:462-63.

immovable in his conviction that the *people* naturally desired to attain God's perfect form of political government. They recognized and chose him to be the leader that God had called to educate and prepare them. He was "' . . . a shepherd of mankind indeed, who loves his charge, and ever loves to lead; one whose meek flock the people joy to be . . . .'"<sup>42</sup> Wilson declared in his governor's acceptance speech:

The future is not for parties 'playing politics' . . . but for measures conceived in the largest spirit, pushed by parties whose leaders are statesmen, not demagogues, who love not their offices, but their duty and opportunity for service. We are witnessing a renaissance of public spirit, a re-awakening of sober public opinion, a revival of the power of the people.<sup>43</sup>

His subsequent victory proved to Wilson that the people, at least in New Jersey, had chosen "his corporate, organic vision of society, now democratized with a popular element."<sup>44</sup> Ironically, it was the Democratic Party bosses with their wealth, contacts, and political machinery that turned Wilson's run into victory.<sup>45</sup> The bosses may have nominated him, but for Wilson, however, it was the people who had elected him. Consequently, he was *their* representative and therefore above the organizations created to manage politics.

As the people's choice for president of the United States in 1912, Wilson received an assurance, a witness, that the American people had chosen him to be their servant-leader. In his ears "the voices of the nation" did not sound "accidental and

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<sup>42</sup>Wilson, "Leaders of Men," June 17, 1890, in *PWW*, 6:671; Wilson is quoting James Russell Lowell's *Ode Recited at the Harvard Commemoration* with verbs changed to present tense.

<sup>43</sup>Woodrow Wilson, A Speech Accepting the Democratic Gubernatorial Nomination, September 15, 1910, in *PWW*, 21: 94; Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, 267-68.

<sup>44</sup>Wilson, Democratic Gubernatorial Nomination, 91-94; Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, p. 267.

<sup>45</sup>H.C.F. Bell, *Woodrow Wilson and the People* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1945, reprint, North Haven: Archon Books, 1968), 36-62; Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, 237-40, 264-268.

discordant . . . .” They revealed to him “in a single vision,” so that he could speak what no one else knew, “the common meaning of the common voice.”<sup>46</sup> That vision, unbounded by geography, required that as servant-leader of the most progressive nation on earth, he was destined to guide mankind to the promised land of Americanism: “We have come out upon a stage of international responsibility from which we cannot retire. . . . every nation of the world needs to be drawn into the tutelage of America to learn how to spend money for the liberty of mankind.”<sup>47</sup>

Woodrow Wilson believed that politics reflected relationships yet the office of president stood above politics.<sup>48</sup> He set about to make the presidency the servant of the people with the understanding that the people would naturally work with him. Political party was simply the means to fulfill the task that God had given him. He was not a servant of the Democratic Party. He was “a servant of the people acting through the Democratic Party.”<sup>49</sup> Wilson called his political party “the party of the people” because it had become, through his presidential victory, the organization to serve God's providence; it was the facilitator of the people's purpose. As such, the Democratic Party assisted the messenger “to cleanse, to restore, to correct the evil without impairing the good, to purify and humanize every process” of the “common life without weakening or sentimentalizing it.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Wilson, “Abraham Lincoln,” *PWW*, 19:42; Bell, *Wilson and the People*, 101-02.

<sup>47</sup>Woodrow Wilson, Speech to the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick in New York, March 17, 1909, in *PWW*, 19:107.

<sup>48</sup>Woodrow Wilson, Notes for Three Lectures, “III. Political Liberty. Political Expediency, and Political Morality in the Democratic State,” July 10, 1894, in *PWW*, 8:607-08.

<sup>49</sup>Woodrow Wilson, “Address on Jury Reform,” May 2, 1913, in *PWW*, 27:387.

<sup>50</sup>Wilson, “Inaugural Address,” *PWW*, 27:148-52.

As a covenanted Christian, Wilson owed responsibility “to God, the Bible, and conscience” before he owed it to any “human authority, be it the church, political, or government organization.”<sup>51</sup> Thus the task superseded the human institution necessary to fulfill it. If the institution followed God’s pattern of order, then he was bound to obey it; otherwise, he was bound to bypass it. When Congress, the State Department, foreign governments, or any other human institution that represented the people interfered with what Wilson interpreted as a nation’s will or moral choice, he circumvented it either through individuals he chose to complete the task or a direct appeal to the people.<sup>52</sup>

When Wilson entered the White House at the beginning of 1913, he was secure in the knowledge that God had called and elected him as His servant-leader guide to facilitate the spread of Christianized democracy at home and abroad. The South’s strong Protestant dependence on the democratic concepts of checks and balances, inclusion, and mission combined with germ theory, the frontier thesis, and social control clothed Wilson’s millennialism with order and discipline. Armed with these tools, Wilson prepared to take up his cross after the First World War’s providential burst onto the international scene and lead the world’s nations to the Promised Land.

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<sup>51</sup>Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 16-17; Woodrow Wilson, An Address in Denver on the Bible, May 7, 1911, in *PWW*, 23:12-20.

<sup>52</sup>Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 27-34, 49-50, 86-90, 100, 103-04, 109-10; Woodrow Wilson, An Historical Essay, “Self Government in France,” September 4, 1879, in *PWW*, 1:515-539, Woodrow Wilson, An Anniversary Address at Hartford Theological Seminary, “The Present Task of the Ministry,” May 26, 1909, in *PWW*, 19:215-22; Woodrow Wilson, A Religious Address at McCormick Theological Seminary, “The Ministry and the Individual,” November 2, 1909, in *PWW*, 19:472, 476-78; From the Diary of Colonel House, October 13, 1917, in *PWW*, 44:378-82; Woodrow Wilson, Two Telegrams to Edward Mandell House, November 18, 1918, in *PWW*, 53:108-09; From the Diary of Colonel House, June 29, 1919, in *PWW*, 61:354-55.



## U.S. UNILATERALITY: AMERICA'S SELFLESS EXAMPLE FOR A MILLENNIAL AGE

Wilson described the United States' redemptive role in the world at the time that he decided to enter World War I as an active participant: "America was born a Christian nation...to exemplify that devotion to the elements of righteousness which are derived from the revelations of Holy Scripture." Based on the Bible's "fixed and eternal standard by which" men judged themselves, America was not "ahead of the other nations of the world" because she was "rich." America was "great" because of "her thought, . . . her ideals, . . . her acceptance of those standards of judgment . . . written large upon [the Bible's] pages of revelation." Wilson envisioned the possibility of a holy war to redeem the Old World through American democracy: "For liberty is a spiritual conception, and when men take up arms to set other men free, there is something sacred and holy in the warfare." Evil would have its day in the form of leaders who *deceived* the people and worked for their own purposes, but God would eventually triumph and destroy them through the people's natural inclination to obey God's laws. The nations that chose to espouse Christian moral and civic law could look forward with certainty to freedom's final victory. As president of the exemplar nation, Wilson would fulfill his sworn duty to God to uphold the common civilized people's right in every land to develop government according to their desires because that government would eventually evolve. He would

also act in their true interests when they chose to achieve political, and therefore spiritual, redemption.<sup>1</sup>

Wilson approached foreign affairs through his nineteenth-century millennialist lens. He defined U.S. neutrality and belligerency in World War I as moral obligations to protect the country's holy character and calling from any alliance that might sully U.S. motives to safeguard the divine agency of all civilized nations to decide their own social, political, progress. Wilson's foreign policy was not founded on Old World politics that enshrined a balance of power between sovereign states through intricate alliances and secret treaties. Instead, it promoted American democracy as the cure for world conflict. Such a foundation would redeem the Old World and inaugurate a united community of humanity through civilized nations' natural moral choice. He believed that once war fever died down and sanity returned, the Allied nations would naturally turn toward impartial peace: "There is coming a time, unless I am very much mistaken where nation shall agree with nation that the rights of humanity are greater than the rights of sovereignty."<sup>2</sup> In the interim, Wilson would remain patient and lead by example.

When the conflict threatened U.S. interests in 1916, Wilson took his first opportunity to voice the possibility of U.S. military intervention as a moral obligation to protect what he viewed as "rights higher than" American commerce and finance, "higher

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<sup>1</sup>Wilson, "Religion and Patriotism," *PWW*, 12:474-78; Woodrow Wilson, An Address in Denver on the Bible, May 7, 1911 in *PWW*, 23:12-20; Woodrow Wilson, "The Bible and Progress," in *The Public Paper of Woodrow Wilson*, 6 vols., eds. Ray Stannard Baker and William E. Dodd (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1925-27), 2:291-302 (hereafter referred to as *PPLL* followed by volume and page numbers); Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, pp. 10-13.

<sup>2</sup>Woodrow Wilson, An Address in Washington to the League to Enforce Peace, May 27, 1916, in *PWW*, 37:113-16; Woodrow Wilson, Address to Nonpartisan Women, October 19, 1916, in *PWW*, 38:481-89; Woodrow Wilson, First Commitment to the Idea of a League of Nations, May 27, 1916, in *PPWW*, 4:184-88.

than the rights of individual Americans outside America,” in other words, “the rights of mankind.” Wilson believed that having made themselves “the guarantors of the rights of national sovereignty and of popular sovereignty on this side of the water in both the continents of the Western Hemisphere (by virtue of the Monroe Doctrine),” Americans had proven ready to do the same in the Eastern Hemisphere through a just and permanent postwar peace.<sup>3</sup> In his Peace Without Victory speech on January 22, 1917, less than two and a half months before he asked Congress for a declaration of war against Germany, Wilson heralded the virtues of the Monroe Doctrine as a global panacea. He declared that “no nation should seek to extend its polity over any other nation or people, but that every people should be left free to determine its own polity, its own way of development, unhindered, unthreatened, unafraid, the little along with the great and powerful . . . there is no entangling alliance in a concert of power . . . we could stand for no other.” In return, the United States would become the interpreter and guarantor of the European nations’ national and popular sovereignty.<sup>4</sup>

Although Wilson still hoped to avoid war to facilitate a New World Order, he sent word through Secretary of State Robert Lansing to his ambassador in Britain, Walter Hines Page on February 8, 1917 that disclosed his intention to fight for enlightened peoples’ right everywhere to self-determination if faced with war against Germany: “The present enthusiastic support which the people of the United States are giving his [Wilson’s] foreign policy is being given . . . because they expect him to use the force and

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<sup>3</sup>Woodrow Wilson, An Address on Preparedness in Topeka, February 2, 1916, in *PWW*, 36:87-96; Woodrow Wilson, Topeka Address, February 2, 1916, in *PPWW*, 4:82-94; Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, 57-8.

<sup>4</sup>Woodrow Wilson, Address to the Senate, Jan. 22, 1917, in *PWW*, 40:533-539; Woodrow Wilson, Essential Terms of Peace in Europe, January 22, 1917, in *PPWW*, 4:407-14.

influence of the United States, if he must use force, not to prolong the war, but to insist upon those rights of his own and the other peoples which he regards and they regard as the basis and the only basis of peace.”<sup>5</sup>

Once passive neutrality proved impossible after Germany resumed unrestricted submarine warfare, Wilson activated the redemptive phase of America’s mission on April 2, 1917 with a recommendation to declare war against Germany. However, if the United States had to fight, Wilson determined that it would do so to defend the same principles that motivated it to proclaim neutrality: “to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power and to set up amongst the really free and self governed peoples of the world such a concert of purpose and of action as will henceforth insure the observance of those principles.” Experience as a neutral mediator convinced Wilson that neither the Allied nor Central Power government leaders wanted the New World Order he envisioned, yet he was equally certain that their peoples desired it above all else. Wilson viewed the conflict in terms of a ‘People’s War’: “a fight thus for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its peoples, the German peoples included: for the rights of nations great and small and the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience. The world must be made safe for democracy.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, Wilson entered the United States in the war as an Associate Power to retain it as the exemplar of independence, “peace without victory,” and self-determination for all civilized nations to follow when they chose. The President felt

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<sup>5</sup>Lansing to Page, February 8, 1917, in *PWW*, 41:158-59.

<sup>6</sup>Diary of Colonel House, March 28, 1917, in *PWW*, 41:496-98; Woodrow Wilson, Address to a Joint Session of Congress, April 2, 1917, in *PWW*, 41:519-27; Woodrow Wilson, For Declaration of War Against Germany, April 2, 1917, in *PPWW*, 5:6-16; Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, 86-7.

justified in his decision one month later after he received copies of the secret Treaty of London, Sykes-Picot Agreement, and Russian Treaty from Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour that divided up the future spoils of war among the Allies.<sup>7</sup> The negotiators' complete disregard for the principles of agency and self-determination prompted Wilson to remark to his European liaison, Colonel House that "England and France *have not the same views with regard to peace that we have by any means.*"<sup>8</sup>

Wilson's decision to stand firm as an Associate Power and defend all civilized peoples' right to choose their destinies reflected his Presbyterian millennialist conviction. He proscribed any conditions on the Allies in return for U.S. military intervention. The President made his position clear in his war message:

We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and freedom of nations can make them.<sup>9</sup>

According to his understanding, the nature and objectives of a future League of Nations resided in the will of the European and American peoples: peoples Wilson believed would choose his vision of peace when the time came as a matter of natural political progression. Eight months later in his annual message to Congress Wilson declared that:

The voices of humanity . . . grow daily more audible, more articulate, more persuasive, and they come from the hearts of men everywhere. They insist that the war shall not end in vindictive action of any kind; that no nation or people shall be

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<sup>7</sup>Balfour to Wilson, May 18, 1917 in *PWW*, 42: 327-28; Wilson to Balfour, May 19, 1917, in *PWW*, 42:346; Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars: Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 137-38.

<sup>8</sup>Wilson to House, July 21 1917, in *PWW*, 43:237-38 (Wilson's emphasis); Knock, *To End All Wars*, 138.

<sup>9</sup>Wilson, An Address to a Joint Session of Congress, *PWW*, 41:519-27.

robbed or punished because the irresponsible rulers of a single country have themselves done deep and abominable wrong.<sup>10</sup>

To try and force the Allied governments' cooperation in his venture exemplified a selfishness equal to their own as revealed in the secret treaties: "We have not forgotten any ideal or principle for which the name America has been held in honour [*sic*] among the nations and for which it has been our glory to contend in the great generations that went before us." Thus, the United States would remain true to its disinterested motives to preserve self-determination and simply "propose for [the war's] outcome only that which is righteous and of irreproachable intention, for our foes as well as for our friends." Certain that "the eyes of the people [had] been opened and they see," Wilson moved forward with confidence that the civilized nations of the world, their moral natures awake, would at last choose to welcome true freedom: "The hand of God is laid upon the nations. He will show them favour [*sic*], I devoutly believe, only if they will rise to the clear heights of His own justice and mercy."<sup>11</sup>

Wilson's subsequent actions with regard to the war, the Paris Peace Accords, and his final days as president attest to the strength of his millennialist vision, his religious conviction in a civilized people's right to choose their own path, and certainty in God's Providence as he interpreted it. Despite Germany's belligerent status, Wilson was careful to distinguish the German government from the people in the wake of the country's refusal to instigate a "democratic revolution" based on his continued overtures. He declared in his July 14, 1917 Flag Day Address that:

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<sup>10</sup>Woodrow Wilson, Annual Message on the State of the Union, December 4, 1917, in *PWW*, 45:194-202.

<sup>11</sup>Wilson, Annual Message on the State of the Union, *PWW*, 45:194-202.

We know now as clearly as we knew before we were ourselves engaged that we are not the enemies of the German people and they are not our enemies. They did not originate or desire this hideous war or wish that we should be drawn into it; and we are vaguely conscious that we are fighting *their* cause, *as they will some day see it*.<sup>12</sup>

Six months later in his annual message to Congress on December 4, Wilson guaranteed the German people a fair settlement in return for their repudiation of the Kaiser's government.<sup>13</sup>

Although the Russian nation was not descended from Anglo-Teutonic stock and therefore lower on the scale of enlightened peoples, Wilson believed that as a civilized nation they also warranted the opportunity to decide their own fate.<sup>14</sup> When an interim democratic government took over, Wilson welcomed it with the warm message that the United States fought for the "liberty, the self-government, and *undictated* development of all peoples . . . . No people must be forced under sovereignty under which it does not wish to live."<sup>15</sup> After the Russians failed to defend their new democracy against the Bolshevik onslaught in December, Wilson took to task a detailed description of his new world order that culminated in his Fourteen Points address on January 8, 1918. Convinced that the Russian people "had been poisoned by the very same falsehoods that have kept the German people in the dark," Wilson announced that "a general association

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<sup>12</sup>Woodrow Wilson, Flag Day Address, June 14, 1917, in *PWW*, 42:498-504; Woodrow Wilson, "This is a People's War," June 14, 1917, in *PPWW*, 5:60-67; Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, 101-102.

<sup>13</sup>Wilson, Annual Message on the State of the Union, *PWW*, 45:194-202; Woodrow Wilson, "Recommending War with Austria-Hungary," December 4, 1917, in *PPWW*, 5:128-39.

<sup>14</sup>William Wiseman, Notes of An Interview with the President at the White House, Wednesday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1918. Very Secret, in W.B. Fowler, *British-American Relations 1917-1918: The Role of Sir William Wiseman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 288; Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, 118-19.

<sup>15</sup>Woodrow Wilson, "Friendship of the American People for the People of Russia," May 26, 1917, in *PPWW*, 5:49-51; Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, 118-19.

must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike.”<sup>16</sup>

Once the war turned in favor of the Allies and victory was assured by the summer of 1918, Wilson declared that through his relationship with the peoples, not the leaders, of Europe, he would be able persuade or if necessary compel the various governments to accept his League of Nations program: "I know that Europe is still governed by the same reactionary forces that controlled this country until a few years ago. But I am satisfied that if necessary I can reach the peoples of Europe over the heads of their Rulers."<sup>17</sup>

Wilson depended on the crucial connection that he perceived between himself as the world's great teacher and the civilized nations of Europe. His conviction, deepened by the cumulative effects of strokes that plagued him from 1896 onward, motivated Wilson to tour the Allied countries prior to the peace accords.<sup>18</sup>

Afraid that a Senate bipartisan delegation, led by Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge who Wilson viewed as “elitist,” would seek to sabotage his peace plan at the postwar negotiations, Wilson bypassed the Senate and headed a Democratic delegation to the Armistice talks and subsequent Paris Peace Conference in 1919.<sup>19</sup> John Maynard Keynes, a technical advisor to British Prime Minister Lloyd George and Deputy

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<sup>16</sup>Wilson, Annual Message on the State of the Union, *PWW* 45:194-202; Woodrow Wilson, Address to a Joint Session of Congress, January 8, 1918, in *PWW*, 45:534-39; Wilson, “Recommending War with Austria-Hungary,” *PPWW*, 5:128-39; Woodrow Wilson, The Fourteen Point Speech, January 8, 1918, in *PPWW*, 5:155-162; Ambrosius, *Wilsonian Statecraft*, 108-112.

<sup>17</sup>Woodrow Wilson, Friday, July 5, 1918, in *Armistice*, vol. 8, *WWLL* (New York, Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1939), 253.

<sup>18</sup>Edwin A. Weinstein, “Woodrow Wilson’s Neurological Illness,” *Journal of American History* 57, no 2 (Sept. 1970): 2324-51; Mulder, *Years of Preparation*, 131-32, 145, 147-50, 185-86, 189-90, 202-03.

<sup>19</sup>Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 86-90; Knock, *To End All Wars*, 167-193.



for the Chancellor of the Exchequer at the proceedings, caught the measure of the President and described him thus:

The President was like a Nonconformist minister, perhaps a Presbyterian. His thought and his temperament were essentially theological not intellectual, with all the strength and the weakness of that manner of thought, feeling and expression. It is a type of which there are not now in England and Scotland such magnificent specimens as formerly; but this description, nevertheless, will give the ordinary Englishman the distinctest impression of the President.<sup>20</sup>

In the face of formidable opposition from Lloyd George and French President George Clemenceau who were determined to protect their own exhausted peoples at all costs, Wilson remained true to the principle of moral choice and self-determination: he backed down from many of the points in his program.<sup>21</sup> He recognized that the Allied nations did not want to accept his vision of peace yet, and he would not force his full plan upon any nation that did not willingly choose it, despite angry protestations from the members of his own delegation.<sup>22</sup>

Once Wilson returned home, he embarked on a U.S. tour to educate the American people about the Treaty and the League of Nations in September 1919; by so doing, he hoped to convince the public to demand that their Congressional representatives vote in favor of the Treaty without the Republican reservations engineered to “exempt the United States from all responsibility for the preservation of peace.” For three weeks he traveled the western half of the United States, ten thousand miles in all, and made forty speeches

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<sup>20</sup>Keynes, *Economic Consequence*, 42.

<sup>21</sup>Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 91-101; Knock, *To End All Wars*, 197-226, 246-51.

<sup>22</sup>Ambrosius. *Wilsonian Statecraft*, 138-40.

before a massive stroke rendered the left side of his body paralyzed.<sup>23</sup> After the Senate defeated the Treaty in November 1919, a physically-and-psychologically weakened Wilson once again turned to the American people and beseeched them to restrain the government from making changes that would “alter” the “meaning” of the Treaty.<sup>24</sup> Historian H.C.F. Bell explained that even at this time, after the stroke had temporarily rendered him partially incoherent, “Wilson was sure that the people would give him victory in the end. . . . His faith that the people would understand and follow him seems to have been deepened, if anything, by his illness.”<sup>25</sup> Nor had his faith diminished eight months later when a Republican victory in 1920 seemed all but a certainty. A recovered, lucid Wilson proclaimed in his Jackson Day speech on October 3, 1920 that the Presidential election was “to be a genuine national referendum” on the League of Nations:

The determination of a great policy upon which the influence and authority of the United States in the world must depend is not to be left to groups of politicians of either party, but is to be referred to the people themselves for a sovereign mandate to their representatives. They are to instruct their own Government what they wish done.<sup>26</sup>

Subsequent to the Republican victory, Wilson continued to espouse an unshakeable faith that the world’s civilized peoples would eventually choose to establish

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<sup>23</sup>For the complete texts of Woodrow Wilson’s addresses, see *PWW*, 63:11, 15, 20-22, 42, 46-47, 49, 67-69, 78, 99, 112, 127-28, 135, 137, 147, 179, 194-95, 218, 246, 249, 279, 173, 312, 335, 345, 356-57, 371, 386-87, 409, 452, 480, 495, 497, 502, 511; Enclosure, “Dr. Dercum’s Memoranda,” in *PWW*, 64:501-07; A Memorandum by Dr. Grayson, in *PWW*, 64:507-11; Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 101-110; Knock, *To End All Wars*, 259-63.

<sup>24</sup>Woodrow Wilson, “A Jackson Day Message,” January 8, 1920, in *PWW*, 64:258; Woodrow Wilson, Great and Solemn Referendum, January 8, 1920, in *PPWW*, 6:453-5; Knock, *To End All Wars*, 263-270.

<sup>25</sup>Bell, *Woodrow Wilson and the People*, 358.

<sup>26</sup>Woodrow Wilson, A Statement, October 3, 1920, in *PWW* 66:181-83; Woodrow Wilson, National Referendum on the League of Nations, October 3, 1920, in *PPWW*, 6:503-505.

an Americanized world community and usher in the millennium, despite the fact that his leadership had not brought it about. That his interpretation of events had been flawed did not matter. He had stayed true to religious principle. To his daughter, Margaret, he remarked shortly before his death in 1924 that the dream would live on and be realized at some future date. U.S. “entrance into the League” with his return from Europe “might have been only a personal victory.” The “only right time” for the American people to join the League would be when they were “convinced” that it was right. “God,” Wilson admitted, “knew better . . . after all.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Gene Smith, *When the Cheering Stopped: The Last Years of Woodrow Wilson* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1964), 219; Magee, *What the World Should Be*, 112-13; Bell, *Woodrow Wilson and the People*, 378-79; Knock, *To End All Wars*, 272.

## CONCLUSION

Wilson declared in 1914: “I believe in the progress of moral ideas in the world; and I don’t know that I am sure of anything else.”<sup>1</sup> Wilson viewed World War I as a divine signal that the time had arrived for the United States to take its foreordained place at the center of world affairs and lead the nations ready for a new kind of peace: one that he envisioned would lay the foundation for an eventual Christ-governed millennial period. His firm Presbyterian millennialist belief in a people’s desire and ability to choose an Americanized world lay at the root of a foreign policy that proscribed coercion for any reason other than to set peoples free who fought against tyrannical government. Wilson’s belief was founded on liberty through obedience to Christian principles and guided by selfless leadership.

His religious conviction allowed Wilson to enter the United States into World War I confident that the European nations would choose to follow his vision of a New World Order despite their leaders’ agendas. His conviction originated in childhood from a biblical Christian covenant faith between God and the individual that espoused moral choice and natural, organic political progression. It expanded to include a racial hierarchy of civilization, social control to maintain orderly progress, and the westward expansion of U.S. nationalism.

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<sup>1</sup>Wilson, “Pittsburgh Y.M.C.A.,” *PWW*, 31:226.

Wilson's religious lens did not preclude the non-white, non-Christian, non-Northern European nations the opportunity to attain the American ideal if they so chose. Wilson believed that God would grant *every* people the opportunity to subscribe to Christian principles as the foundation for proper government. However, he believed that such peoples developed along a natural path of *barbarism* in consequence of their ancestors' willing divergence from the covenantal path of obedience established by God in the Old Testament. Before these peoples could establish a successful democracy, they required an indeterminate period of direct intervention to raise them from their primitive, debased state and develop their long-dormant divinely-bestowed moral judgment.

Furthermore, Wilson recognized the need for a strong servant-leader who understood and protected the people's true interest against the privileged classes as a result of his direct political relationship to them. He accepted what he believed was the work that God had ordained him to do not as a *political* religious leader but as a *religious* political leader. Consequently, Wilson refused to take a position in the war that hinted at coercion; instead, he intended to lead by example and let the individual nations decide their fates once the conflict ended. Wilson determined to persuade, not force, the European nations to embrace his plan for a New World Order through the spoken word and the righteous example of Christian service.

Wilson's foreign policy actions throughout the war to the end of his term reflected a behavioral pattern consistent with his specific Presbyterian millennialist lens. He crafted a neutrality policy that reflected his religious faith in their moral judgment to find and steer the proper course. Wilson remained separate from what he observed as the taint of Old World alliances and power politics during the passive and aggressive phases of his

neutrality policy. He believed that such a position allowed him to provide the peoples of Europe with the clearest possible choice between the path to future conflict and the path to permanent peace. At each crucial juncture Wilson turned to the people to see his plan through. Although they left him in Europe and the United States, Wilson remained convinced to the end of his life that, eventually, the civilized nations of the world would choose his League vision because his vision was God's vision. He had not created it, but had tried to bring it about through the mission he believed God had called him to perform. He had made mistakes that led to a selfish desire to rush God's providence and found the people not yet ready to make the leap. However, one day they would be, and when they were, the American nation would lead the way:

Power, in its last analysis, is never a thing of mere physical force; the power that lasts has at its center the just conception to which men's judgments assent, to which their hearts and inclinations respond. An unjust thing is never ephemeral; it cannot outlast any age of movement or inquiry. The action of the world, if you will but watch it in the long measure, is always based upon right thinking, and the thinker must always walk at the front and show the way.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Woodrow Wilson, "The Statesmanship of Letters," November 5, 1903, in *PWW*, 15:36.

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